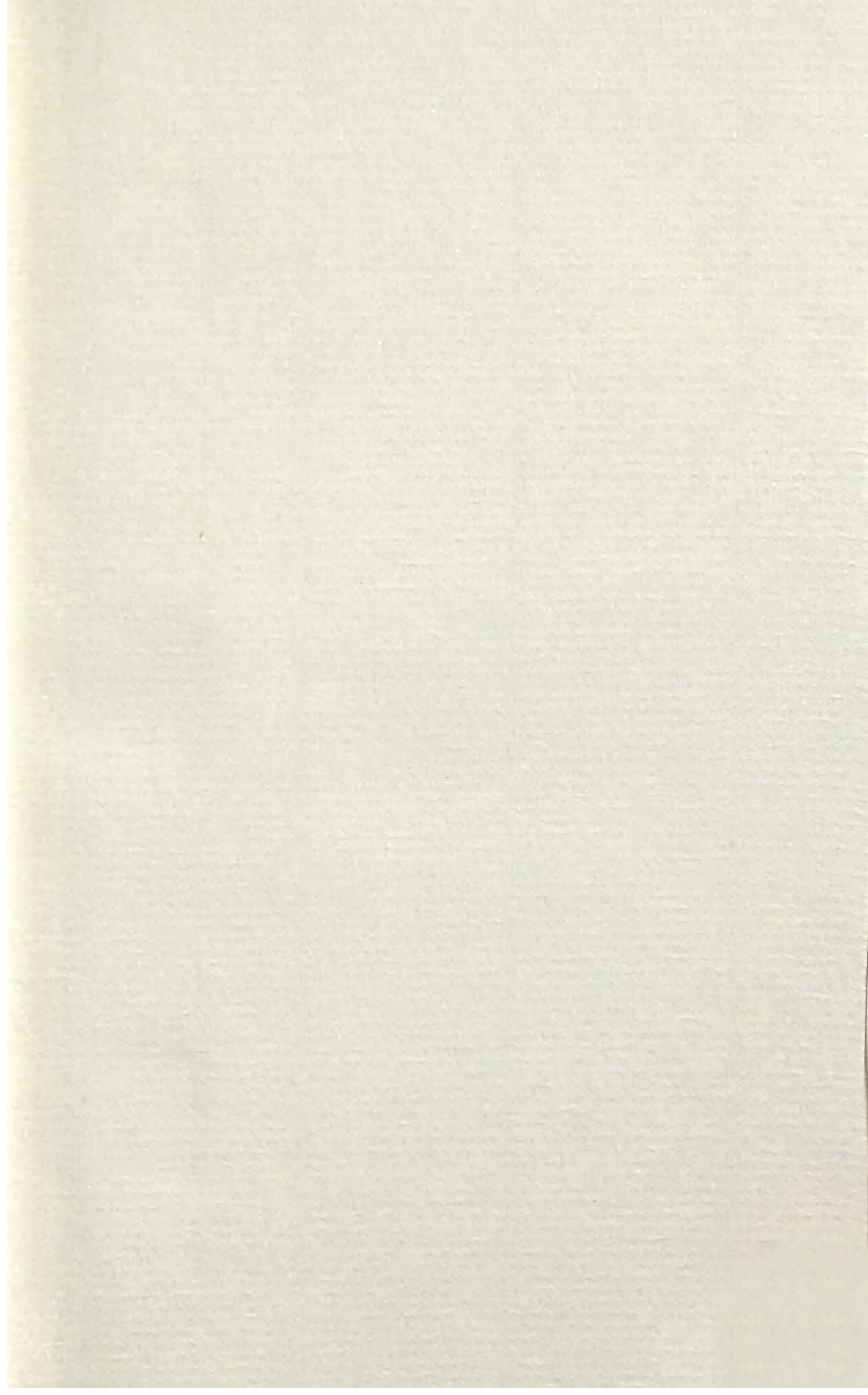




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THE
COMPLETE WORKS

OF
E. L. BULWER.

VOL XVI.

LEILA OR THE SIEGE OF GRANADA.

CALDERON THE COURTIER.

THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

THE LADY OF LYONS.

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THE

COMPLETE WORKS

OF

E. L. BULWER.

VOL. XVI.



LEIPZIG,

FREDERICK FLEISCHER.

1839.

COMPLETE WORKS

REVISED EDITION

BY J. H. M. J. VAN DER



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TO
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE COUNTESS OF BLESSINGTON,
THIS TALE IS DEDICATED
BY ONE
WHO WISHES HE COULD HAVE FOUND
A MORE DURABLE MONUMENT
WHEREON TO ENGRAVE
A MEMORIAL
OF
REAL FRIENDSHIP.

LONDON, 1838.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE appearance of this Volume so shortly after that of the Novel of "ALICE" renders it due to the Public to state, that "LEILA" was written more than a year and a half ago, although the time employed in the Engravings has delayed its publication to the present date.

Knebworth, April 27, 1838.

ADVERTISEMENT

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London, April 25, 1833.
Knobworth, April 25, 1833.

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E. B. T. A.

OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

CALDERON, THE GOVERNOR

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EDWARD TITON, DEPT.

ALBANY

ALBANY, N. Y.

1838

LEILA,
OR THE SIEGE OF GRANADA.

CALDERON, THE COURTIER.

THE DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS.

THE LADY OF LYONS,

OR LOVE AND PRIDE.

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

EDWARD LYTTON BULWER.

LEIPZIG,

FREDERICK FLEISCHER.

1839.

THE
SIRTS OF GRANADA

B O O K I.

BOOK I

THE SIEGE OF GRANADA.

CHAPTER I.

The enchanter and the warrior.

It was the summer of the year 1491, and the armies of Ferdinand and Isabel invested the city of Granada.

The night was not far advanced; and the moon, which broke through the transparent air of Andalusia, shone calmly over the immense and murmuring encampment of the Spanish foe, and touched with a hazy light the snow-capped summits of the Sierra Nevada, contrasting the verdure and luxuriance which no devastation of man could utterly sweep from the beautiful vale below.

In the streets of the Moorish city many a group still lingered. Some, as if unconscious of the beleaguering war without, were listening in quiet indolence to the strings of the Moorish lute, or the lively tale of some Arabian improvvisatore; others were conversing with such eager and animated gestures, as no ordinary

excitement could wring from the stately calm habitual to every oriental people. But the more public places, in which gathered these different groups, only the more impressively heightened the desolate and solemn repose that brooded over the rest of the city.

At this time, a man, with downcast eyes, and arms folded within the sweeping gown which descended to his feet, was seen passing through the streets, alone, and apparently unobservant of all around him. Yet this indifference was by no means shared by the straggling crowds through which, from time to time, he musingly swept.

"God is great!" said one man; "it is the Enchanter Almamen."

"He hath locked up the manhood of Boabdil el Chico with the key of his spells," quoth another, stroking his beard. "I would curse him, if I dared."

"But they say that he hath promised that when man fails, the genii will fight for Granada," observed a fourth, doubtingly.

"Allah Akbar! what is, is! what shall be, shall be!" said a fifth, with all the solemn sagacity of a prophet.

Whatever their feelings, whether of awe or execration, terror or hope, each group gave way as Almamen passed, and hushed the murmurs not intended for his ear. Passing through the Zacatin (the street which traversed the Great Bazaar), the (so-styled) enchanter ascended a narrow and winding street, and arrived at last before the walls that encircled the palace and fortress of the Alhambra.

The sentry at the gate saluted and admitted him in silence; and in a few moments his form was lost in the

solitude of groves, amidst which, at frequent openings, the spray of Arabian fountains glittered in the moonlight; while, above, rose the castled heights of the Alhambra; and on the the right, those Vermilion Towers, whose origin veils itself in the furthest ages of Phœnician enterprise.

Almamen paused, and surveyed the scene. "Was Aden more lovely?" he muttered; "and shall so fair a spot be trodden by the victor Nazarene? What matters? creed chases creed—race, race—until time comes back to its starting place, and beholds the reign restored to the eldest faith and the eldest tribe. The horn of our strength shall be exalted."

At these thoughts the seer relapsed into silence, and gazed long and intently upon the stars, as, more numerous and brilliant with every step of the advancing night, their rays broke on the playful waters, and tinged with silver the various and breathless foliage. So earnest was his gaze, and so absorbed his thoughts, that he did not perceive the approach of a Moor, whose glittering weapons and snow-white turban rich with emeralds, cast a gleam through the wood.

The new comer was above the common size of his race, generally small and spare, but without attaining the lofty stature and large proportions of the more redoubted of the warriors of Spain. But in his presence and mien there was something which, in the haughtiest conclave of Christian chivalry, would have seemed to tower and command. He walked with a step at once light and stately, as if it spurned the earth; and in the carriage of the small erect head and stag-like throat, there was that undefinable and imposing

dignity, which accords so well with our conception of a heroic lineage, and a noble though imperious spirit. The stranger approached Almamen, and paused abruptly when within a few steps of the enchanter. He gazed upon him in silence for some moments; and, when at length he spoke, it was with a cold and sarcastic tone.

"Pretender to the dark secrets" said he, "is it in the stars that thou art reading those destinies of men and nations, which the Prophet wrought by the chieftain's brain and the soldier's arm?"

"Prince," replied Almamen, turning slowly, and recognising the intruder on his meditations, "I was but considering how many revolutions, which have shaken earth to its centre, those orbs have witnessed, unsympathising and unchanged."

"Unsympathising!" repeated the Moor — "yet thou believest in their effect upon the earth?"

"You wrong me," answered Almamen, with a slight smile; "you confound your servant with that vain race, the astrologers."

"I deemed astrology a part of the science of the two Angels, Harût and Marût." *

"Possibly; but I know not that science, though I have wandered at midnight by the ancient Babel."

"Fame lies to us then," answered the Moor, with some surprise.

"Fame never made pretence to truth," said Almamen, calmly, and proceeding on his way; "Allah be with you, prince! I seek the king."

* The science of magic. It was taught by the Angels named in the text; for which offence they are still supposed to be confined in the ancient Babel. There they may yet be consulted, though they are rarely seen.—*Yallal'odin Yahya*.—Sale's *Koran*.

“Stay! I have just quitted his presence, and left him, I trust, with thoughts worthy of the sovereign of Granada, which I would not have a stranger, and a man whose arms are not spear nor shield, break in upon and disturb.”

“Noble Muza,” returned Almamen, “fear not that my voice will weaken the inspirations which thine hath breathed into the breast of Boabdil. Alas! if my counsel were heeded, thou wouldst hear the warriors of Granada talk less of Muza, and more of the king. But Fate, or Allah, hath placed upon the throne of a tottering dynasty, one who, though brave, is weak—though wise, a dreamer; and you suspect the adviser, when you find the influence of nature on the advised. Is this just?”

Muza gazed long and sternly on the face of Almamen; then, putting his hand gently on the enchanter’s shoulder, he said—

“Stranger, if thou playest us false, think that this arm hath cloven the casque of many a foe, and will not spare the turban of a traitor!”

“And think thou, proud prince!” returned Almamen, unquailing, “that I answer alone to Allah for my motives, and that against man my deeds I can defend!”

With these words, the enchanter drew his long robe round him, and disappeared amidst the foliage.

CHAPTER II.

The king within his palace.

IN one of those apartments, the luxury of which is known only to the inhabitants of a genial climate (half chamber and half grotto), reclined a young Moor, in a thoughtful and musing attitude.

The ceiling of cedar-wood, glowing with gold and azure, was supported by slender shafts, of the whitest alabaster, between which were open arcades, light and graceful as the arched vineyards of Italy, and wrought in that delicate filigree work common to the Arabian architecture: through these arcades was seen at intervals the lapsing fall of waters, lighted by alabaster lamps; and their tinkling music sounded with a fresh and regular murmur upon the ear. The whole of one side of this apartment was open to a broad and extensive balcony, which overhung the banks of the winding and moonlit Darro; and in the clearness of the soft night might be distinctly seen the undulating hills, the woods, and orange-groves, which still form the unrivalled landscapes of Granada.

The pavement was spread with ottomans and couches of the richest azure, prodigally enriched with quaint designs in broderies of gold and silver; and over that on which the Moor reclined, facing the open balcony, were suspended, on a pillar, the round shield, the light javelin, and the curving cimeter, of Moorish warfare. So studded were these arms with jewels of

rare cost, that they might alone have sufficed to indicate the rank of the evident owner, even if his own gorgeous vestments had not betrayed it. An open manuscript, on a silver table, lay unread before the Moor; as, leaning his face upon his hand, he looked with abstracted eyes along the mountain summits, dimly distinguished from the cloudless and far horizon.

No one could have gazed without a vague emotion of interest, mixed with melancholy, upon the countenance of the inmate of that luxurious chamber. There was in it much of that ineffable presentiment of doom and disaster which we think to recognise on the features of our own Charles the First.

Its beauty was singularly stamped with a grave and stately sadness, which was made still more impressive by its air of youth, and the unwonted fairness of the complexion: unlike the attributes of the Moorish race, the hair and curling beard were of a deep golden colour; and on the broad forehead, and in the large eyes, was that settled and contemplative mildness which rarely softens the swart lineaments of the fiery children of the sun. Such was the personal appearance of Boabdil el Chico, the last of the Moorish dynasty in Spain.

"These scrolls of Arabian learning," said Boabdil to himself, "what do they teach? to despise wealth and power, to hold the heart to be the true empire. This, then, is wisdom. Yet, if I follow these maxims, am I wise? alas! the whole world would call me a driveller and a madman. Thus is it ever; the wisdom of the Intellect fills us with precepts which it is the wisdom of Action to despise. O Holy Prophet! what fools men would be, if their knavery did not eclipse their folly!"

The young king listlessly threw himself back on his cushions as he uttered these words, too philosophical for a king whose crown sat so loosely on his brow.

After a few moments of thought that appeared to dissatisfy and disquiet him, Boabdil again turned impatiently round: "My soul wants the bath of music," said he; "these journeys into a pathless realm have wearied it, and the streams of sound supple and relax the travailed pilgrim."

He clapped his hands, and from one of the arcades a boy, hitherto invisible, started into sight; at a slight and scarce perceptible sign from the king, the boy again vanished, and in a few moments afterwards, glancing through the fairy pillars, and by the glittering waterfalls, came the small and twinkling feet of the maids of Araby. As, with their transparent tunics and white arms, they gleamed, without an echo, through that cool and voluptuous chamber, they might well have seemed the Peris of the eastern magic, summoned to beguile the sated leisure of a youthful Solomon. With them came a maiden of more exquisite beauty, though smaller stature, than the rest, bearing the light Moorish lute; and a faint and languid smile broke over the beautiful face of Boabdil, as his eyes rested upon her graceful form, and the dark yet glowing lustre of her oriental countenance. She alone approached the king, timidly kissed his hand, and then, joining her comrades, commenced the following song, to the air and very words of which the feet of the dancing-girls kept time, while, with the chorus, rang the silver bells of the musical instrument which each of the dancers carried.

AMINE'S SONG.

I.

Softly, oh, softly glide,
 Gentle Music, thou silver tide,
 Bearing, the lull'd air along,
 This leaf from the Rose of Song!
 To its port in his soul let it float,
 The frail, but the fragrant boat, —
 Bear it soft Air along!

II.

With the burthen of Sound we are laden,
 Like the bells on the trees of Aden,*
 When they thrill with a tinkling tone
 At the Wind from the Holy Throne.
 Hark, as we move around
 We shake off the buds of Sound; —
 Thy presence, Belov'd, is Aden!

III.

Sweet chime that I hear and wake:
 I would, for my lov'd one's sake,
 That I were a sound like thee,
 To the depths of his heart to flee.
 If my breath had his senses blest;
 If my voice in his heart could rest;
 What pleasure to die like thee!

The music ceased; the dancers remained motionless in their graceful postures, as if arrested into statues of alabaster; and the young songstress cast herself on a cushion at the feet of the monarch, and looked up fondly, but silently, into his yet melancholy

* The Mahometans believe that musical bells hang on the trees of Paradise, and are put in motion by a wind from the throne of God.

eyes, — when a man, whose entrance had not been noticed, was seen to stand within the chamber.

He was about the middle stature, — lean, muscular, and strongly though sparely built. A plain black robe, something in the fashion of the Armenian gown, hung long and loosely over a tunic of bright scarlet, girded by a broad belt, from the centre of which was suspended a small golden key, while at the left side appeared the jewelled hilt of a crooked dagger. His features were cast in a larger and grander mould than was common amongst the Moors of Spain: the forehead was broad, massive, and singularly high, and the dark eyes of unusual size and brilliancy; his beard, short, black, and glossy, curled upward, and concealed all the lower part of the face, save a firm, compressed, and resolute expression in the lips, which were large and full; the nose was high, aquiline, and well-shaped; and the whole character of the head (which was, for symmetry, on too large and gigantic a scale as proportioned to the form) was indicative of extraordinary energy and power. At the first glance, the stranger might have seemed scarce on the borders of middle age; but, on a more careful examination, the deep lines and wrinkles, marked on the forehead and round the eyes, betrayed a more advanced period of life. With arms folded on his breast, he stood by the side of the king, waiting in silence the moment when his presence should be perceived.

He did not wait long; the eyes and gesture of the girl nestled at the feet of Boabdil drew the king's attention to the spot where the stranger stood: his eye brightened when it fell upon him.

“Almaman,” cried Boabdil, eagerly, “you are wel-

come." As he spoke, he motioned to the dancing-girls to withdraw.

"May I not rest? O core of my heart, thy bird is in its home," murmured the songstress at the king's feet."

"Sweet Amine," answered Boabdil, tenderly smoothing down her ringlets as he bent to kiss her brow; "you should witness only my hours of delight. Toil and business have nought with thee; I will join thee ere yet the nightingale hymns his last music to the moon." Amine sighed, rose, and vanished with her companions.

"My friend," said the king, when alone with Al-mamen, "your counsels often soothe me into quiet, yet in such hours quiet is a crime. But what do? — how struggle? — how act? Alas! at the hour of his birth rightly did they affix to the name of Boabdil the epithet of *El Zogoybi*.* Misfortune set upon my brow her dark and fated stamp ere yet my lips could shape a prayer against her power. My fierce father, whose frown was as the frown of Azrael, hated me in my cradle: in my youth my name was invoked by rebels against my will: imprisoned by my father, with the poison-bowl or the dagger hourly before my eyes, I was saved only by the artifice of my mother. When age and infirmity broke the iron sceptre of the king, my claims to the throne were set aside, and my uncle, El Zagal, usurped my birthright. Amidst open war and secret treason I wrestled for my crown; and now, the sole sovereign of Granada, when, as I fondly imagined, my uncle had lost all claim on the affections of

* The Unlucky.

my people by succumbing to the Christian king, and accepting a fief under his dominion, I find that the very crime of El Zagal is fixed upon me by my unhappy subjects — that they deem he would not have yielded but for my supineness. At the moment of my delivery from my rival, I am received with execration by my subjects, and, driven into this my fortress of the Alhambra, dare not venture to head my armies, or to face my people; yet am I called weak and irresolute, when strength and courage are forbid me. And as the water glides from yonder rock, that hath no power to retain it, I see the tide of empire welling from my hands."

The young king spoke warmly and bitterly; and, in the irritation of his thoughts, strode, while he spoke, with rapid and irregular strides, along the chamber. Almamen marked his emotion with an eye and lip of rigid composure.

"Light of the faithful," said he, when Boabdil had concluded, "the powers above never doom man to perpetual sorrow, nor perpetual joy: the cloud and the sunshine are alike essential to the heaven of our destinies; and if thou hast suffered in thy youth, thou hast exhausted the calamities of fate, and thy manhood will be glorious, and thine age serene."

"Thou speakest as if the armies of Ferdinand were not already around my walls," said Boabdil, impatiently.

"The armies of Sennacherib were as mighty," answered Almamen.

"Wise seer," returned the king, in a tone half sarcastic and half solemn, "we, the Musselmen of Spain, are not the blind fanatics of the eastern world. On us have fallen the lights of philosophy and science; and if

the more clear-sighted among us yet outwardly reverence the forms and fables worshipped by the multitude, it is from the wisdom of policy, not the folly of belief. Talk not to me, then, of thine examples of the ancient and elder creeds: the agents of God for this world are now, at least, in men, not angels; and if I wait till Ferdinand share the destiny of Sennacherib, I wait only till the Standard of the Cross wave above the Vermilion Towers."

"Yet," said Almamen, "while my lord the king rejects the fanaticism of belief, doth he reject the fanaticism of persecution? You disbelieve the stories of the Hebrews; yet you suffer the Hebrews themselves, that ancient and kindred Arabian race, to be ground to the dust, condemned and tortured by your judges, your informers, your soldiers, and your subjects."

"The base misers! they deserve their fate," answered Boabdil, loftily. "Gold is their god, and the marketplace their country; amidst the tears and groans of nations, they sympathise only with the rise and fall of trade; and, the thieves of the universe! while their hand is against every man's coffer, why wonder that they provoke the hand of every man against their throats? Worse than the tribe of Hanifa, who eat their god only in time of famine;* the race of Moisa** would sell the Seven Heavens for the dent*** on the back of the date stone."

"Your laws leave them no ambition but that of avarice," replied Almamen; "and, as the plant will

* The tribe of Hanifa worshipped a lump of dough.

** Moisa, Moses.

*** A proverb used in the Koran, signifying the smallest possible trifle.

crook and distort its trunk, to raise its head, through every obstacle, to the sun, so the mind of man twists and perverts itself, if legitimate openings are denied it, to find its natural elements in the gale of power, or the sunshine of esteem. These Hebrews were not traffickers and misers in their own sacred land, when they routed your ancestors, the Arab armies of old; and gnawed the flesh from their bones in famine, rather than yield a weaker city than Granada to a mightier force than the holiday lords of Spain. Let this pass. My lord, who rejects the belief in the agencies of the angels, doth he still retain belief in the wisdom of mortal men?"

"Yes!" returned Boabdil, quickly; "for of the one I know naught, — of the other, mine own senses can be the judge. Almamen, my fiery kinsman, Muza, hath this evening been with me. He hath urged me to reject the fears against my people, that chain my panting spirit within these walls: he hath urged me to gird on yonder shield and cimeter, and to appear in the Vivarrambla, at the head of the nobles of Granada. My heart leaps high at the thought! and, if I cannot live, at least I will die — a king!"

"It is nobly spoken," said Almamen, coldly.

"You approve, then, my design?"

"The friends of the king cannot approve the ambition of the king to die."

"Ha!" said Boabdil, in an altered voice; "thou thinkest, then, that I am doomed to perish in this struggle?"

"As the hour shall be chosen, wilt thou fall or triumph."

"And that hour?"

"Is not yet come."

"Dost thou read the hour in the stars?"

"Let Moorish seers cultivate that frantic credulity; thy servant sees but in the stars worlds mightier than this little earth, whose light would neither wane nor wink, if earth itself were swept from the infinities of space."

"Mysterious man!" said Boabdil; "whence, then, is thy power? whence thy knowledge of the future?"

Almamen approached the king, as he now stood by the open balcony.

"Behold!" said he, pointing to the waters of the Darro — "yonder stream is of an element in which man cannot live nor breathe: above, in the thin and impalpable air, our steps cannot find a footing, the armies of all earth cannot build an empire. And yet, by the exercise of a little art, the fishes and the birds, the inhabitants of the air and the water, minister to our most humble wants, the most common of our enjoyments: so is it with the true science of enchantment. Thinkest thou that, while the petty surface of the world is crowded with living things, there is no life in the vast centre within the earth, and the immense ether that surrounds it? As the fisherman snares his prey, as the fowler entraps the bird; so, by the art and genius of our human mind, we may thrall and command the subtler beings of realms and elements which our material bodies cannot enter—our gross senses cannot survey. This, then, is my lore. Of other worlds know I naught; but of the things of this world, whether men, or, as your legends term them, ghouls and genii, I have learned something. To the future I myself am blind;

but I can invoke and conjure up those whose eyes are more piercing, whose natures are more gifted."

"Prove to me thy power," said Boabdil, awed less by the words than by the thrilling voice and the impressive aspect of the enchanter.

"Is not the king's will my law?" answered Almamen; "be his will obeyed. To-morrow night I await thee."

"Where?"

Almamen paused a moment, and then whispered a sentence in the king's ear: Boabdil started, and turned pale.

"A fearful spot!"

"So is the Alhambra itself, great Boabdil; while Ferdinand is without the walls, and Muza within the city."

"Muza! Darest thou mistrust my bravest warrior?"

"What wise king will trust the idol of the king's army? Did Boabdil fall to-morrow, by a chance javelin, in the field, whom would the nobles and the warriors place upon his throne? Doth it require an enchanter's lore to whisper to thy heart the answer, in the name of 'Muza?'"

"Oh, wretched state! oh, miserable king!" exclaimed Boabdil, in a tone of great anguish. "I never had a father; I have now no people: a little while, and I shall have no country. Am I never to have a friend?"

"A friend! what king ever had?" returned Almamen, drily.

"Away, man, away!" cried Boabdil, as the impatience spirit of his rank and race shot dangerous fire from his eyes; "your cold and bloodless wisdom freezes up all the veins of my manhood! Glory, confidence, hu-

man sympathy, and feeling — your counsels annihilate them all. Leave me! I would be alone."

"We meet to-morrow, at midnight, mighty Boabdil," said Almamen, with his usual unmoved and passionless tones. "May the king live for ever!"

The king turned; but his monitor had already disappeared. He went as he came — noiseless and sudden as a ghost.

CHAPTER III.

The lovers.

WHEN Muza parted from Almamen, he bent his steps towards the hill that rises opposite the ascent crowned with the towers of the Alhambra; the sides and summit of which eminence were tenanted by the luxurious population of the city. He selected the more private and secluded paths; and, half-way up the hill, arrived, at last, before a low wall of considerable extent, which girded the gardens of some wealthier inhabitant of the city. He looked long and anxiously round: all was solitary; nor was the stillness broken, save as an occasional breeze, from the snowy heights of the Sierra Nevada, rustled the fragrant leaves of the citron and pomegranate; or, as the silver tinkling of waterfalls chimed melodiously within the gardens. The Moor's heart beat high; a moment more, and he had scaled the wall; and found himself upon a green sward, variegated by the rich colours of many a sleeping flower, and shaded by groves and alleys of luxuriant foliage and golden fruits.

It was not long before he stood beside a house that seemed of a construction anterior to the Moorish dynasty. It was built over low cloisters, formed by heavy and time-worn pillars, concealed, for the most part, by a profusion of roses and creeping shrubs: the lattices above the cloisters opened upon large gilded balconies, the super-addition of Moriscan taste. In one only of the casements a lamp was visible; the rest of the mansion was dark, as if, save in that chamber. sleep kept watch over the inmates. It was to this window that the Moor stole; and, after a moment's pause, he murmured, rather than sung, so low and whispered was his voice, the following simple verses, slightly varied from an old Arabian poet.

SERENADE.

Light of my soul, arise, arise!
 Thy sister lights are in the skies;
 We want thine eyes,
 Thy joyous eyes;
 The Night is mourning for thine eyes!
 The sacred verse is on my sword,
 But on my heart thy name:
 The words on each alike adored;
 The truth of each the same.
 The same! — alas! too well I feel
 The heart is truer than the steel!
 Light of my soul! upon me shine;
 Night wakes her stars to envy mine.
 Those eyes of thine,
 Wild eyes of thine,
 What stars are like those eyes of thine?

As he concluded, the lattice softly opened; and a female form appeared on the balcony.

"Ah, Leila!" said the Moor, "I see thee, and I am blessed!"

"Hush!" answered Leila; "speak low, nor tarry long: I fear that our interviews are suspected; and this (she added, in a trembling voice) may, perhaps, be the last time we shall meet."

"Holy prophet!" exclaimed Muza, passionately, "what do I hear? Why this mystery? why cannot I learn thine origin, thy rank, thy parents? Think you, beautiful Leila, that Granada holds a house lofty enough to disdain the alliance of Muza Ben Abil Gazan? and oh! (he added, sinking the haughty tones of his voice into accents of the softest tenderness), if not too high to scorn me, what should war against our loves and our bridals? For worn equally on my heart were the flower of thy sweet self, whether the mountain top or the valley gave birth to the odour and the bloom."

"Alas!" answered Leila, weeping, "the mystery thou complainest of, is as dark to myself as thee. How often have I told thee that I know nothing of my birth or childish fortunes, save a dim memory of a more distant and burning clime; where, amidst sands and wastes, springs the everlasting cedar, and the camel grazes on stunted herbage withering in the fiery air? Then, it seemed to me that I had a mother: fond eyes looked on me, and soft songs hushed me into sleep."

"Thy mother's soul has passed into mine," said the Moor, tenderly.

Leila continued: — "Borne hither, I passed from childhood into youth within these walls. Slaves minister to my slightest wish; and those who have seen both state and poverty, which I have not, tell me that treasures and splendour, that might glad a monarch, are prodigalised around me: but of ties and kindred know I little: my father, a stern and silent man, visits

me but rarely — sometimes months pass, and I see him not; but I feel he loves me; and, till I knew thee, Muza, my brightest hours were in listening to the footsteps and flying to the arms of that solitary friend."

"Know you not his name?"

"Nor I, nor any one of the household; save, perhaps, Ximen, the chief of the slaves, an old and withered man, whose very eye chills me into fear and silence."

"Strange!" said the Moor, musingly; "yet why think you our love is discovered, or can be thwarted?"

"Hush! Ximen sought me this day: 'Maiden,' said he, 'men's footsteps have been tracked within the gardens; if your sire know this, you will have looked your last upon Granada. Learn,' he added, (in a softer voice, as he saw me tremble,) 'that permission were easier given to thee to wed the wild tiger, than to mate with the loftiest noble of Morisca! Beware!' He spoke, and left me. O Muza! (she continued, passionately wringing her hands,) my heart sinks within me, and omen and doom rise dark before my sight!"

"By my father's head, these obstacles but fire my love; and I would scale to thy possession, though every step in the ladder were the corpses of a hundred foes!"

Scarcely had the fiery and high-souled Moor uttered his boast, than, from some unseen hand amidst the groves, a javelin whirred past him, and, as the air it raised came sharp upon his cheek, half buried its quivering shaft in the trunk of a tree behind him.

"Fly, fly, and save thyself! O God, protect him!" cried Leila; and she vanished within the chamber."

The Moor did not wait the result of a deadlier

aim: he turned; yet, in the instinct of his fierce nature, not from, but against, the foe; his drawn cimeter in his hand, the half-suppressed cry of wrath trembling on his lips, he sprung forward in the direction whence the javelin had sped. With eyes accustomed to the ambuscades of Moorish warfare, he searched eagerly, yet warily, through the dark and sighing foliage. No sign of life met his gaze; and at length, grimly and reluctantly, he retraced his steps, and quitted the demesnes: but, just as he had cleared the wall, a voice — low, but sharp, and shrill — came from the gardens.

"Thou art spared," it said, "but, haply, for a more miserable doom!"

CHAPTER IV.

The father and daughter.

THE chamber into which Leila retreated bore out the character she had given of the interior of her home. The fashion of its ornament and decoration was foreign to that adopted by the Moors of Granada. It had a more massive and, if we may use the term, *Egyptian* gorgeousness. The walls were covered with the stuffs of the East, stiff with gold, embroidered upon ground of the deepest purple; strange characters, apparently in some foreign tongue, were wrought in the tessellated cornices and on the heavy ceiling, which was supported by square pillars, round which were twisted serpents of gold and enamel, with eyes to which enormous emeralds gave a green and lifelike glare: various

scrolls and musical instruments lay scattered upon marble tables; and a solitary lamp of burnished silver cast a dim and subdued light around the chamber. The effect of the whole, though splendid, was gloomy, strange, and oppressive, and rather suited either to the cold climate of the Norman, or to the thick and cavelike architecture which of old protected the inhabitants of Thebes and Memphis from the rays of the African sun, than the transparent heaven and light pavilions of the graceful orientals of Granada.

Leila stood within this chamber, pale and breathless, with her lips apart, her hands clasped, her very soul in her ears; nor was it possible to conceive a more perfect ideal of some delicate and brilliant peri, captured in the palace of a hostile and gloomy genius. Her form was of the lightest shape consistent with the roundness of womanly beauty; and there was something in it of that elastic and fawnlike grace which a sculptor seeks to embody in his dreams of a being more aerial than those of earth. Her luxuriant hair was dark indeed, but a purple and glossy hue redeemed it from that heaviness of shade too common in the tresses of the Asiatics; and her complexion, naturally pale, but clear and lustrous, would have been deemed fair even in the north. Her features, slightly aquiline, were formed in the rarest mould of symmetry, and her full rich lips disclosed teeth that might have shamed the pearl. But the chief charm of that exquisite countenance was in an expression of softness and purity, and intellectual sentiment, that seldom accompanies that cast of loveliness, and was wholly foreign to the voluptuous and dreamy languor of Moorish maidens; — Leila had been educated, and the statue had received a soul.

After a few minutes of intense suspense, she again stole to the lattice, gently unclosed it, and looked forth. Far, through an opening amidst the trees, she descried, for a single moment, the erect and stately figure of her lover, darkening the moonshine on the sward, as now, quitting his fruitless search, he turned his lingering gaze towards the lattice of his beloved: the thick and interlacing foliage quickly hid him from her eyes; but Leila had seen enough — she turned within, and said, as grateful tears trickled down her cheeks, and she sank on her knees upon the piled cushions of the chamber: “God of my fathers! I bless thee—he is safe!”

“And yet, (she added, as a painful thought crossed her,) how may I pray for him? we kneel not to the same Divinity; and I have been taught to loathe and shudder at his creed! Alas! how will this end? Fatal was the hour when he first beheld me in yonder gardens, more fatal still the hour in which he crossed the barrier, and told Leila that she was beloved by the hero whose arm was the shelter, whose name is the blessing, of Granada. Ah, me! Ah, me!”

The young maiden covered her face with her hands, and sunk into a passionate reverie, broken only by her sobs. Some time had passed in this undisturbed indulgence of her grief, when the arras was gently put aside, and a man, of remarkable garb and mien, advanced into the chamber, pausing as he beheld her dejected attitude, and gazing on her with a look in which pity and tenderness seemed to struggle against habitual severity and sternness.

“Leila!” said the intruder.

Leila started, and a deep blush suffused her coun-

tenance; she dashed the tears from her eyes, and came forward with a vain attempt to smile.

"My father, welcome!"

The stranger seated himself on the cushions, and motioned Leila to his side.

"These tears are fresh upon thy cheek," said he, gravely; "they are the witness of thy race! our daughters are born to weep, and our sons to groan; ashes are on the head of the mighty, and the Fountains of the Beautiful run with gall! O, that we could but struggle—that we could but dare—that we could raise up our heads, and unite against the bondage of the evil-doer! It may not be—but one man shall avenge a nation!"

The dark face of Leila's father, well fitted to express powerful emotion, became terrible in its wrath and passion; his brow and lip worked convulsively; but the paroxysm was brief; and scarce could she shudder at its intensity, ere it had subsided into calm.

"Enough of these thoughts, which thou, a woman and a child, art not formed to witness. Leila, thou hast been nurtured with tenderness, and schooled with care. Harsh and unloving may I have seemed to thee, but I would have shed the best drops of my heart to have saved thy young years from a single pang. Nay, listen to me silently. That thou mightest one day be worthy of thy race, and that thine hours might not pass in indolent and weary lassitude, thou hast been taught the lessons of a knowledge rarely given to thy sex. Not thine the lascivious arts of the Moorish maidens; not thine their harlot songs, and their dances of lewd delight; thy delicate limbs were but taught the attitude that Nature dedicates to the worship of a God, and the music of thy

voice was tuned to the songs of thy fallen country, sad with the memory of her wrongs, animated with the names of her heroes, holy with the solemnity of her prayers. These scrolls, and the lessons of our seers, have imparted to thee such of our science and our history as may fit thy mind to aspire, and thy heart to feel for a sacred cause. Thou listenest to me, Leila ?”

Perplexed and wondering, for never before had her father addressed her in such a strain, the maiden answered with an earnestness of manner that seemed to content the questioner; and he resumed, with an altered, hollow, solemn voice:

“Then, curse the persecutors! Daughter of the great Hebrew race, arise and curse the Moorish task-master and spoiler!”

As he spoke, the adjuror himself rose, lifting his right hand on high, while his left touched the shoulder of the maiden. But she, after gazing a moment in wild and terrified amazement upon his face, fell cowering at his knees; and, clasping them imploringly, exclaimed, in scarce articulate murmurs:

“Oh, spare me! spare me!”

The Hebrew, for such he was, surveyed her, as she thus quailed at his feet, with a look of rage and scorn: his hand wandered to his poniard, he half unsheathed it, thrust it back with a muttered curse, and then, deliberately drawing it forth, cast it on the ground beside her.

“Degenerate girl!” he said, in accents that vainly struggled for calm, “if thou hast admitted to thy heart one unworthy thought towards a Moorish infidel, dig deep and root it out, even with the knife, and to the death — so wilt thou save this hand from that degrading task.”

He drew himself hastily from her grasp, and left the unfortunate girl alone and senseless.

CHAPTER V.

Ambition distorted into vice by law.

ON descending a broad flight of stairs from the apartment, the Hebrew encountered an old man, habited in loose garments of silk and fur, upon whose withered and wrinkled face life seemed scarcely to struggle against the advance of death — so haggard, wan and corpselike, was its aspect.

“Ximen,” said the Israelite, “trusty and beloved servant, follow me to the cavern.” He did not tarry for an answer, but continued his way with rapid strides, through various courts and alleys, till he came at length into a narrow, dark, and damp gallery, that seemed cut from the living rock. At its entrance was a strong grate, which gave way to the Hebrew’s touch upon the spring, though the united strength of a hundred men could not have moved it from its hinge. Taking up a brazen lamp that burnt in a niche within it, the Hebrew paused impatiently till the feeble steps of the old man reached the spot; and then, reclosing the grate, pursued his winding way for a considerable distance, till he stopped suddenly by a part of the rock which seemed in no respect different from the rest: and so artfully contrived and concealed was the door which he now opened, and so suddenly did it yield to his hand, that it appeared literally the effect of enchantment, when the rock yawned, and discovered

a circular cavern, lighted with brazen lamps, and spread with hangings and cushions of thick furs. Upon rude and seemingly natural pillars of rock, various antique and rusty arms were suspended; in large niches were deposited scrolls, clasped and bound with iron; and a profusion of strange and uncouth instruments and machines (in which modern science might, perhaps, discover the tools of chemical invention,) gave a magical and ominous aspect to the wild abode.

The Hebrew cast himself on a couch of furs; and, as the old man entered and closed the door, "Ximen," said he, "fill out wine — it is a soothing counsellor, and I need it."

Extracting from one of the recesses of the cavern a flask and goblet, Ximen proffered to his lord a copious draught of the sparkling vintage of the Vega, which seemed to invigorate and restore him.

"Old man," said he, concluding the potation with a deep-drawn sigh, "fill to thyself — drink till thy veins feel young."

Ximen obeyed the mandate but imperfectly; the wine just touched his lips, and the goblet was put aside.

"Ximen," resumed the Israelite, "how many of our race have been butchered by the avarice of the Moorish kings, since first thou didst set foot within the city?"

"Three thousand — the number was completed last winter, by the order of Jusef, the vizier; and their goods and coffers are transformed into shafts and cimeters, against the dogs of Galilee."

"Three thousand — no more! three thousand only? I would the number had been tripled, for the interest is becoming due!"

"My brother, and my son, and my grandson, are

among the number," said the old man, and his face grew yet more deathlike.

"Their monuments shall be in hecatombs of their tyrants. They shall not, at least, call the Jews niggards in revenge."

"But pardon me, noble chief of a fallen people; thinkest thou we shall be less despoiled and trodden under foot by yon haughty and stiffnecked Nazarenes, than by the Arabian misbelievers?"

"Accursed, in truth, are both," returned the Hebrew; "but the one promise more fairly than the other. I have seen this Ferdinand, and his proud queen; they are pledged to accord us rights and immunities we have never known before in Europe."

"And they will not touch our traffic, our gains, our gold?"

"Out on thee!" cried the fiery Israelite, stamping on the ground. "I would all the gold of earth were sunk into the everlasting pit! It is this mean, and miserable, and loathsome leprosy of avarice, that gnaws away from our whole race the heart, the soul, nay, the very form, of man! Many a time, when I have seen the lordly features of the descendants of Solomon and Joshua (features that stamp the nobility of the eastern world born to mastery and command) sharpened and furrowed by petty cares, — when I have looked upon the frame of the strong man bowed, like a crawling reptile, to some huckstering bargainer of silks and unguents, — and heard the voice, that should be raising the battle-cry, smoothed into fawning accents of base fear, or yet baser hope, — I have asked myself, if I am indeed of the blood of Israel! and thanked the great Jehovah, that he hath spared me, at

least, the curse that hath blasted my brotherhood into usurers and slaves!"

Ximen prudently forbore an answer to enthusiasm which he neither shared nor understood; but, after a brief silence, turned back the stream of the conversation.

"You resolve, then, upon prosecuting vengeance on the Moors, at whatsoever hazard of the broken faith of these Nazarenes?"

"Ay, the vapour of human blood hath risen unto heaven, and, collected into thunder-clouds, hangs over the doomed and guilty city. And now, Ximen, I have a new cause for hatred to the Moors: the flower that I have reared and watched, the spoiler hath sought to pluck it from my hearth. Leila — thou hast guarded her ill, Ximen; and, wert thou not endeared to me by thy very malice and vices, the rising sun should have seen thy trunk on the waters of the Darro."

"My lord," replied Ximen, "if thou, the wisest of our people, canst not guard a maiden from love, how canst thou see crime in the dull eyes and numbed senses of a miserable old man?"

The Israelite did not answer, nor seem to hear this deprecatory remonstrance. He appeared rather occupied with his own thoughts; and, speaking to himself, he muttered, "It must be so: the sacrifice is hard — the danger great; but here, at least, it is more immediate. It shall be done. Ximen," he continued, speaking aloud, "dost thou feel assured that even mine own countrymen, mine own tribe, know me not as one of them? Were my despised birth and religion published, my limbs would be torn asunder as an impostor; and all the arts of the Cabala could not save me."

"Doubt not, great master; none in Granada, save thy faithful Ximen, know thy secret."

"So let me dream and hope. And now to my work; for this night must be spent in toil."

The Hebrew drew before him some of the strange instruments we have described; and took, from the recesses in the rock, several scrolls. The old man lay at his feet, ready to obey his behests; but, to all appearance, rigid and motionless as the dead, whom his blanched hues and shrivelled form resembled. It was, indeed, as the picture of the enchanter at his work, and the corpse of some man of old, revived from the grave to minister to his spells, and execute his commands.

Enough in the preceding conversation has transpired to convince the reader, that the Hebrew, in whom he has already detected the Almamen of the Alhambra, was of no character common to his tribe. Of a lineage that shrouded itself in the darkness of his mysterious people, in their day of power, and possessed of immense wealth, which threw into poverty the resources of Gothic princes, — the youth of that remarkable man had been spent, not in traffic and merchandise, but travel and study.

As a child, his home had been in Granada. He had seen his father butchered by the late king, Muley Abul Hassan, without other crime than his reputed riches; and his body literally cut open, to search for the jewels it was supposed he had swallowed. He saw; and, boy as he was, he vowed revenge. A distant kinsman bore the orphan to lands more secure from persecution; and the art with which the Jews concealed their wealth, scattering it over various cities, had secured to Almamen the treasures the tyrant of Granada had failed to grasp.

He had visited the greater part of the world then

known; and resided, for many years, in the court of the sultan of that hoary Egypt, which still retained its fame for abstruse science and magic lore. He had not in vain applied himself to such tempting and wild researches; and had acquired many of those secrets, now, perhaps, lost for ever to the world. We do not mean to intimate that he attained to what legend and superstition impose upon our faith as the art of sorcery. He could neither command the elements, nor pierce the veil of the future, — scatter armies with a word, nor pass from spot to spot by the utterance of a charmed formula. But men who, for ages, had passed their lives in attempting all the effects that can astonish and awe the vulgar, could not but learn some secrets which all the more sober wisdom of modern times would search ineffectually to solve or to revive. And many of such arts, acquired mechanically (their invention often the work of a chemical accident), those who attained to them could not always explain, nor account for the phenomena they created, so that the mightiness of their own deceptions deceived themselves; and they often believed they were the masters of the nature to which they were, in reality, but erratic and wild disciples. Of such was the student in that grim cavern. He knew himself an impostor; but yet he was, in some measure, the dupe, partly of his own bewildered wisdom, partly of the fervour of an imagination exceedingly high-wrought and enthusiastic. His own gorgeous vanity intoxicated him: and, if it be a historical truth that the kings of the ancient world, blinded by their own power, had moments in which they believed themselves more than men, it is not incredible that sages, elevated even above kings, should conceive a frenzy as weak, or, it may be, as sublime; and imagine that they

did not claim, in vain, the awful dignity with which the faith of the multitude invested their faculties and gifts.

But, though the accident of birth, which excluded him from all field for energy and ambition, had thus directed the powerful mind of Almamen to contemplation and study, nature had never intended passions so fierce for the calm, though visionary pursuits to which he was addicted. Amidst scrolls and seers, he had pined for action and glory; and, baffled in all wholesome egress, by the universal exclusion which, in every land, and from every faith, met the religion he belonged to, the faculties within him ran riot, producing gigantic, but baseless schemes, which, as one after the other crumbled away, left behind feelings of dark misanthropy, and intense revenge.

Perhaps, had his religion been prosperous and powerful, he might have been a sceptic; persecution and affliction made him a fanatic. Yet, true to that prominent characteristic of the old Hebrew race which made them look to a Messiah only as a warrior and a prince, and which taught them to associate all their hopes and schemes with worldly victories and power, Almamen desired rather to advance, than to obey, his religion. He cared little for its precepts, he thought little of its doctrines; but, night and day, he revolved his schemes for its earthly restoration and triumph.

At that time, the Moors in Spain were far more deadly persecutors of the Jews than the Christians were. Amidst the Spanish cities on the coast, that merchant tribe had formed commercial connexions with the Christians, sufficiently beneficial, both to individuals as to communities, to obtain them, not only toleration, but something of personal friendship, wherever men bought

and sold in the market-place. And the gloomy fanaticism which afterwards stained the fame of the great Ferdinand, and introduced the horrors of the Inquisition, had not yet made itself more than fitfully visible. But the Moors had treated this unhappy people with a wholesale and relentless barbarity. At Granada, under the reign of the fierce father of Boabdil, — “that king with the tiger heart,” — the Jews had been literally placed without the pale of humanity; and, even under the mild and contemplative Boabdil himself, they had been plundered without mercy, and, if suspected of secreting their treasures, massacred without scruple; the wants of the state continued their unrelenting accusers, — their wealth, their inexpiable crime.

It was in the midst of these barbarities that Almamen, for the first time since the day when the death-shriek of his agonised father rung in his ears, suddenly returned to Granada. He saw the unmitigated miseries of his brethren, and he remembered and repeated his vow. His name changed, his kindred dead, none remembered, in the mature Almamen, the beardless child of Isaschar, the Jew. He had long, indeed, deemed it advisable to disguise his faith; and was known, throughout the African kingdoms, but as the potent santón, or the wise magician.

This fame soon lifted him, in Granada, high in the councils of the court. Admitted to the intimacy of Muley Hassan, with Boabdil, and the queen mother, he had conspired against that monarch; and had lived, at least, to avenge his father upon the royal murderer. He was no less intimate with Boabdil; but, steeled against fellowship or affection for all men out of the pale of his faith,

he saw, in the confidence of the king, only the blindness of a victim.

Serpent as he was, he cared not through what mire of treachery and fraud he trailed his baleful folds, so that, at last, he could spring upon his prey. Nature had given him sagacity and strength. The curse of circumstance had humbled, but reconciled him to the dust. He had the crawl of the reptile, — he had, also, its poison and its fangs.

CHAPTER VI.

The lion in the net.

It was the next night, not long before day-break, that the King of Granada abruptly summoned to his council, Jusef, his vizier. The old man found Boabdil in great disorder and excitement; but he almost deemed his sovereign mad, when he received from him the order to seize upon the person of Muza Ben Abil Gazan, and to lodge him in the strongest dungeon of the Vermilion Tower. Presuming upon Boabdil's natural mildness, the vizier ventured to remonstrate, — to suggest the danger of laying violent hands upon a chief so beloved, — and to inquire what cause should be assigned for the outrage.

The veins swelled like cords upon Boabdil's brow, as he listened to the vizier; and his answer was short and peremptory.

"Am I yet a king, that I should fear a subject, or excuse my will? Thou hast my orders; there are my signet and the firman: obedience, or the bowstring!"

Never before had Boabdil so resembled his dread father in speech and air; the vizier trembled to the soles of his feet, and withdrew in silence. Boabdil watched him depart; and then, clasping his hands in great emotion, exclaimed, "O lips of the dead! ye have warned me; and to you I sacrifice the friend of my youth."

On quitting Boabdil, the vizier, taking with him some of those foreign slaves of a seraglio, who know no sympathy with human passion outside its walls, bent his way to the palace of Muza, sorely puzzled and perplexed. He did not, however, like to venture upon the hazard of the alarm it might occasion throughout the neighbourhood, if he endeavoured, at so unseasonable an hour, to force an entrance. He resolved, rather, with his train, to wait at a little distance, till, with the growing dawn, the gates should be unclosed, and the inmates of the palace astir.

Accordingly, cursing his stars, and wondering at his mission, Jusef, and his silent and ominous attendants, concealed themselves in a small copse adjoining the palace, until the daylight fairly broke over the awakened city. He then passed into the palace; and was conducted to a hall, where he found the renowned Moslem already astir, and conferring with some zegri captains upon the tactics of a sortie designed for that day.

It was with so evident a reluctance and apprehension that Jusef approached the prince, that the fierce and quick-sighted zegrís instantly suspected some evil intention in his visit; and, when Muza, in surprise, yielded to the prayer of the vizier for a private audience, it was with scowling brows and sparkling eyes that the Moorish warriors left the darling of the nobles alone with the messenger of their king.

"By the tomb of the prophet!" said one of the zegrís, as he quitted the hall, "the timid Boabdil suspects our Ben Abil Gazan. I learned of this before."

"Hush!" said another of the band; "let us watch. If the king touch a hair of Muza's beard, Allah have mercy on his sins!"

Meanwhile, the vizier, in silence, shewed to Muza the firman and the signet; and then, without venturing to announce the place to which he was commissioned to conduct the prince, besought him to follow him at once. Muza changed colour, — but not with fear.

"Alas!" said he, in a tone of deep sorrow, "can it be that I have fallen under my royal kinsman's suspicion or displeasure? But no matter; proud to set to Granada an example of valour in her defence, be it mine to set, also, an example of obedience to her king. Go on — I will follow thee. Yet stay, you will have no need of guards; let us depart by a private egress: the zegrís might misgive, did they see me leave the palace with you at the very time the army are assembling in the Vivarrambla, and awaiting my presence. This way."

Thus saying, Muza, who, fierce as he was, obeyed every impulse that the oriental loyalty dictated from a subject to a king, passed from the hall to a small door that admitted into the garden, and in thoughtful silence accompanied the vizier towards the Alhambra. As they passed the copse in which Muza, two nights before, had met with Almamen, the Moor, lifting his head suddenly, beheld fixed upon him the dark eyes of the magician, as he emerged from the trees. Muza thought there was in those eyes a malign and hostile exultation; but Almamen, gravely saluting him, passed on through the grove: the

prince did not deign to look back, or he might once more have encountered that withering gaze.

"Proud heathen!" muttered Almamen to himself, "thy father filled his treasuries from the gold of many a tortured Hebrew; and even thou, too haughty to be the miser, hast been savage enough to play the bigot. Thy name is a curse in Israel: yet dost thou lust after the daughter of our despised race, and, could defeated passion sting thee, I were avenged. Ay, sweep on, with thy stately step and lofty crest — thou goest to chains, perhaps to death."

As Almamen thus vented his bitter spirit, the last gleam of the white robes of Muza vanished from his gaze. He paused a moment, turned away abruptly, and said, half aloud, "Vengeance, not on one man only, but a whole race! Now for the Nazarene."

CHAPTER I.

B O O K II.

B O O K

CHAPTER I.

The royal tent of Spain — The king and the dominican — The visitor and the hostage.

OUR narrative now summons us to the Christian army, and to the tent in which the Spanish king held nocturnal counsel with some of his more confidential warriors and advisers. Ferdinand had taken the field with all the pomp and circumstance of a tournament rather than of a campaign; and his pavilion literally blazed with purple and cloth of gold.

The king sate at the head of a table on which were scattered maps and papers; nor in countenance and mien did that great and politic monarch seem unworthy of the brilliant chivalry by which he was surrounded. His black hair, richly perfumed and anointed, fell in long locks on either side of a high imperial brow; upon whose calm, though not unfurrowed surface, the physiognomist would in vain have sought to read the inscrutable heart of kings. His features were regular and majestic: and his mantle, clasped with a single jewel of rare price and lustre, and wrought at the breast with a silver cross, waved over a vigorous and manly frame, which derived from the composed and tranquil dignity of habitual command, that imposing effect which many of the renowned knights and heroes in his presence took from loftier stature and ampler proportions. At his right hand sat Prince Juan, his son, in the first

bloom of youth; at his left, the celebrated Rodrigo Ponce de Leon, marquess of Cadiz; along the table, in the order of their military rank, were seen the splendid Duke of Medina Sidonia, equally noble in aspect and in name; the worn and thoughtful countenance of the Marquess de Villena (the Bayard of Spain); the melancholy brow of the heroic Alonzo de Aguilar; and the gigantic frame, the animated features, and sparkling eyes, of that fiery Hernando del Pulgar, surnamed "the knight of the exploits."

"You see, señores," said the king, continuing an address to which his chiefs seemed to listen with reverential attention, "our best hope of speedily gaining the city is rather in the dissensions of the Moors than our own sacred arms. The walls are strong, the population still numerous; and under Muza ben Abil Gazan the tactics of the hostile army are, it must be owned, administered with such skill as to threaten very formidable delays to the period of our conquest. Avoiding the hazard of a fixed battle, the infidel cavalry harass our camp by perpetual skirmishes; and in the mountain defiles our detachments cannot cope with their light horse and treacherous ambuscades. It is true, that by dint of time, by the complete devastation of the Vega, and by vigilant prevention of convoys from the sea-towns, we might starve the city into yielding. But, alas! my lords, our enemies are scattered and numerous, and Granada is not the only place before which the standard of Spain should be unfurled. Thus situated, the lion does not disdain to serve himself of the fox; and, fortunately, we have now in Granada an ally that fights for us. I have actual knowledge of all that passes within

the Alhambra: the king yet remains in his palace irresolute and dreaming; and I trust that an intrigue, by which his jealousies are aroused against his general, Muza, may end either in the loss of that able leader, or in the commotion of open rebellion or civil war. Treason within Granada will open its gates to us."

"Sire," said Ponce de Leon, after a pause, "under your counsels I no more doubt of seeing our banner floating above the Vermilion Towers, than I doubt the rising of the sun over yonder hills: it matters little whether we win by stratagem or force. But I need not say to your highness, that we should carefully beware, lest we be amused by inventions of the enemy, and trust to conspiracies which may be but lying tales to blunt our sabres and paralyse our action."

"Bravely spoken, wise de Leon!" exclaimed Hernando del Pulgar, hotly: "and against these infidels, aided by the cunning of the Evil One, methinks our best wisdom lies in the sword-arm. Well says our old Castilian proverb,

'Curse them devoutly,
Hammer them stoutly.'

The king smiled slightly at the ardour of the favourite of his army, but looked round for more deliberate counsel.

"Sire," said Villena, "far be it from us to inquire the grounds upon which your majesty builds your hope of dissension among the foe: but, placing the most sanguine confidence in a wisdom never to be deceived, it is clear that we should relax no energy within our means, but fight while we plot, and seek to conquer, while we do not neglect to undermine."

"You speak well, my lord," said Ferdinand, thoughtfully; "and you yourself shall head a strong detachment to-morrow, to lay waste the Vega. Seek me two hours hence; the council for the present is dissolved."

The knights rose, and withdrew with the usual grave and stately ceremonies of respect, which Ferdinand observed to, and exacted from, his court: the young prince remained.

"Son," said Ferdinand, when they were alone, "early and betimes should the Infants of Spain be lessoned in the science of kingcraft. These nobles are among the brightest jewels of the crown; but still it is in the crown, and for the crown, that their light should sparkle. Thou seest how hot, and fierce, and warlike, are the chiefs of Spain — excellent virtues when manifested against our foes: but had we no foes, Juan, such virtues might cause us exceeding trouble. By St. Jago, I have founded a mighty monarchy! observe how it should be maintained: — by science, Juan, by science! and science is as far removed from brute force as this sword from a crowbar. Thou seemest bewildered and amazed, my son: thou hast heard that I seek to conquer Granada by dissensions among the Moors; when Granada is conquered, remember that the nobles themselves are a Granada. Ave Maria! blessed be the Holy Mother, under whose eyes are the hearts of kings!"

Ferdinand crossed himself devoutly; and then, rising, drew aside a part of the drapery of the pavilion, and called, in a low voice, the name of Perez. A grave Spaniard, somewhat past the verge of middle age, appeared.

"Perez," said the king, reseating himself, "has the person we expected from Granada yet arrived?"

"Sire, yes; accompanied by a maiden."

"He hath kept his word; admit them. Ha, holy father! thy visits are always as balsam to the heart."

"Save you, my son!" returned a man in the robes of a Dominican friar, who had entered suddenly and without ceremony by another part of the tent, and who now seated himself with smileless composure at a little distance from the king.

There was a dead silence for some moments; and Perez still lingered within the tent, as if in doubt whether the entrance of the friar would not prevent or delay obedience to the king's command. On the calm face of Ferdinand himself appeared a slight shade of discomposure and irresolution, when the monk thus resumed:

"My presence, my son, will not, I trust, disturb your conference with the infidel — sith you deem worldly policy demands your parley with the men of Belial?"

Doubtless not — doubtless not, "returned the king, quickly: then, muttering to himself, "how wondrously doth this holy man penetrate into all our movements and designs!" — he added, aloud, "Let the messenger enter."

Perez bowed and withdrew.

During this time the young prince reclined in listless silence on his seat; and on his delicate features was an expression of weariness which augured but ill of his fitness for the stern business to which the lessons of his wise father were intended to educate his mind. His, indeed, was the age, and his the soul, for pleasure;

the tumult of the camp was to him but a holiday exhibition—the march of an army, the exhilaration of a spectacle; the court was a banquet—the throne, the best seat at the entertainment. The life of the heir-apparent, to the life of the king-possessive, is as the distinction between enchanting hope and tiresome satiety.

The small gray eyes of the friar wandered over each of his royal companions with a keen and penetrating glance, and then settled in the aspect of humility on the rich carpets that bespread the floor; nor did he again lift them till Perez, reappearing, admitted to the tent the Israelite, Almamen, accompanied by a female figure, whose long veil, extending from head to foot, could conceal neither the beautiful proportions nor the trembling agitation of her frame.

“When last, great king, I was admitted to thy presence,” said Almamen, “thou didst make question of the sincerity and faith of thy servant; thou didst ask me for a surety of my faith; thou didst demand a hostage; and didst refuse further parley without such pledge were yielded to thee. Lo! I place under thy kingly care this maiden—the sole child of my house—as surety of my truth; I intrust to thee a life dearer than my own.”

“You have kept faith with us, stranger,” said the king, in that soft and musical voice which well disguised his deep craft and his unrelenting will; “and the maiden whom you intrust to our charge shall be ranked with the ladies of our royal consort.”

“Sire,” replied Almamen, with touching earnestness, “you now hold the power of life and death over all for whom this heart can breathe a prayer or cherish

a hope, save for my countrymen and my religion. This solemn pledge between thee and me I render up without scruple, without fear. To thee I give a hostage, *from thee I have but a promise.*"

"But it is the promise of a king, a Christian, and a knight," said the king, with dignity rather mild than arrogant; "among monarchs, what hostage can be more sacred? Let this pass: how proceed affairs in the rebel city?"

"May this maiden withdraw, ere I answer my lord the king?" said Almamen.

The young prince started to his feet. "Shall I conduct this new charge to my mother?" he asked, in a low voice, addressing Ferdinand.

The king half smiled: "The holy father were a better guide," he returned, in the same tone. But, though the Dominican heard the hint, he retained his motionless posture; and Ferdinand, after a momentary gaze on the friar, turned away. "Be it so, Juan," said he, with a look meant to convey caution to the prince; "Perez shall accompany you to the queen: return the moment your mission is fulfilled—we want your presence."

While this conversation was carried on between the father and son, the Hebrew was whispering, in his sacred tongue, words of comfort and remonstrance to the maiden: but they appeared to have but little of the desired effect; and, suddenly falling on his breast, she wound her arms around the Hebrew, whose breast shook with strong emotions, and exclaimed passionately, in the same language, "Oh, my father! what have I done?—why send me from thee?—why intrust thy child to the stranger? Spare me, spare me!"

"Child of my heart!" returned the Hebrew, with solemn but tender accents, "even as Abraham offered up his son, must I offer thee, upon the altars of our faith; but, O Leila! even as the angel of the Lord forbade the offering, so shall thy youth be spared, and thy years reserved for the glory of generations yet unborn. King of Spain!" he continued, in the Spanish tongue, suddenly and eagerly, "you are a father: forgive my weakness, and speed this parting."

Juan approached; and, with respectful courtesy, attempted to take the hand of the maiden.

"You!" said the Israelite, with a dark frown. "O king! the prince is young."

"Honour knoweth no distinction of age," answered the king. "What ho, Perez! accompany this maiden and the prince to the queen's pavilion."

The sight of the sober years and grave countenance of the attendant seemed to reassure the Hebrew. He strained Leila in his arms; printed a kiss upon her forehead without removing her veil; and then, placing her almost in the arms of Perez, turned away to the further end of the tent, and concealed his face with his hands. The king appeared touched; but the Dominican gazed upon the whole scene with a sour scowl.

Leila still paused for a moment; and then, as if recovering her self-possession, said, aloud and distinctly, — "Man deserts me; but I will not forget that God is over all." Shaking off the hand of the Spaniard, she continued, "Lead on; I follow thee!" and left the tent with a steady and even majestic step.

"And now," said the king, when alone with the Dominican and Almamen, "how proceed our hopes?"

"Boabdil," replied the Israelite, "is aroused against both his army and their leader, Muza: the king will not quit the Alhambra; and this morning, ere I left the city, Muza himself was in the prisons of the palace."

"How!" cried the king, starting from his seat.

"This is my work," pursued the Hebrew, coldly. "It is these hands that are shaping for Ferdinand of Spain the keys of Granada."

"And right kingly shall be your guerdon," said the Spanish monarch, "meanwhile, accept this earnest of our favour."

So saying, he took from his breast a chain of massive gold, the links of which were curiously inwrought with gems, and extended it to the Israelite. Almamen moved not. A dark flush upon his countenance bespoke the feelings he with difficulty restrained.

"I sell not my foes for gold, great king," said he, with a stern smile: "I sell my foes to buy the ransom of my friends."

"Churlish!" said Ferdinand, offended; "but speak on, man! speak on!"

"If I place Granada, ere two weeks are past, within thy power, what shall be my reward?"

"Thou didst talk to me, when last we met, of immunities to the Jews."

The calm Dominican looked up as the king spoke, crossed himself, and resumed his attitude of humility.

"I demand for the people of Israel," returned Almamen, "free leave to trade and abide within the city, and follow their callings, subjected only to the same laws and the same imposts as the Christian population."

"The same laws, and the same imposts! Humph! there are difficulties in the concession. If we refuse?"

"Our treaty is ended. Give me back the maiden — you will have no further need of the hostage you demanded: I return to the city, and renew our interviews no more."

Politic and cold-blooded as was the temperament of the great Ferdinand, he had yet the imperious and haughty nature of a prosperous and long-descended king; and he bit his lip in deep displeasure at the tone of the dictatorial and stately stranger.

"Thou usest plain language, my friend," said he; "my words can be as rudely spoken. Thou art in my power, and canst return not, save at my permission."

"I have your royal word, sire, for free entrance and safe egress," answered Almamen. "Break it, and Granada is with the Moors till the Darro runs red with the blood of her heroes, and her people strew the vales as the leaves in autumn."

"Art thou then thyself of the Jewish faith?" asked the king. "If thou art not, wherefore are the outcasts of the world so dear to thee?"

"My fathers were of that creed, royal Ferdinand; and if I myself desert their creed, I do not desert their cause. O king! are my terms scorned or accepted?"

"I accept them: provided, first, that thou obtainest the exile or death of Muza; secondly, that within two weeks of this date thou bringest me, along with the chief councillors of Granada, the written treaty of the capitulation, and the keys of the city. Do this: and, though the sole king in Christendom who dares the hazard, I offer to the Israelites throughout Andalusia

the common laws and rights of citizens of Spain; and to thee I will accord such dignity as may content thy ambition."

The Hebrew bowed reverently, and drew from his breast a scroll, which he placed on the table before the king.

"This writing, mighty Ferdinand, contains the articles of our compact."

"How, knave! wouldst thou have us commit our royal signature to conditions with such as thou art, to the chance of the public eye? The king's word is the king's bond!"

The Hebrew took up the scroll with imperturbable composure. "My child!" said he — "will your majesty summon back my child? we would depart."

"A sturdy mendicant this, by the Virgin!" muttered the king; and then, speaking aloud, "Give me the paper, I will scan it."

Running his eyes hastily over the words, Ferdinand paused a moment, and then drew towards him the implements of writing, signed the scroll, and returned it to Almamen.

The Israelite kissed it thrice with oriental veneration, and replaced it in his breast.

Ferdinand looked at him hard and curiously. He was a profound reader of men's characters; but that of his guest baffled and perplexed him.

"And how, stranger," said he, gravely, — "how can I trust that man who thus distrusts one king and sells another?"

"O king!" replied Almamen (accustomed from his youth to commune with and command the possessors of thrones yet more absolute), — "O king! if thou believ-

est me actuated by personal and selfish interests in this our compact, thou hast but to make my service minister to my interest, and the lore of human nature will tell thee that thou hast won a ready and submissive slave. But if thou thinkest I have avowed sentiments less abject, and developed qualities higher than those of the mere bargainer for sordid power, oughtest thou not to rejoice that chance has thrown into thy way one whose intellect and faculties may be made thy tool? If I betray another, that other is my deadly foe. Dost not thou, the lord of armies, betray thine enemy? the Moor is an enemy bitterer to myself than to thee. Because I betray an enemy, am I unworthy to serve a friend? If I, a single man, and a stranger to the Moor, can yet command the secrets of palaces, and render vain the counsels of armed men, have I not in that attested that I am one of whom a wise king can make an able servant?"

"Thou art a subtle reasoner, my friend," said Ferdinand, smiling gently. "Peace go with thee! our conference for the time is ended. What ho, Perez!"

The attendant appeared.

"Thou hast left the maiden with the queen?"

"Sire, you have been obeyed."

"Conduct this stranger to the guard who led him through the camp. He quits us under the same protection. Farewell! Yet stay — thou art assured that Muza Ben Abil Gazan is in the prisons of the Moor?"

"Yes."

"Blessed be the Virgin!"

"Thou hast heard our conference, Father Tomas?" said the king, anxiously, when the Hebrew had withdrawn.

"I have, son."

"Did thy veins freeze with horror?"

"Only when my son signed the scroll. It seemed to me then that I saw the cloven foot of the tempter."

"Tush, father! the tempter would have been more wise than to reckon upon a faith which no ink and no parchment can render valid, if the church absolve the compact. Thou understandest me, father?"

"I do. I know your pious heart and well-judging mind."

"Thou wert right," resumed the king, musingly, "when thou didst tell us that these caitiff Jews were waxing strong in the fatness of their substance. They would have equal laws — the insolent blasphemers!"

"Son!" said the Dominican, with earnest adjuration, "God, who has prospered your arms and councils, will require at your hands an account of the power intrusted to you. Shall there be no difference between His friends and His foes — His disciples and His crucifiers?"

"Priest," said the king, laying his hand on the monk's shoulder, and with a saturnine smile upon his countenance, "were religion silent in this matter, policy has a voice loud enough to make itself heard. The Jews demand equal rights: when men demand equality with their masters, treason is at work, and justice sharpens her sword. Equality! these wealthy usurers! Sacred Virgin! they would be soon buying up our kingdoms."

The Dominican gazed hard on the king. "Son, I trust thee," he said, in a low voice, and glided from the tent.

CHAPTER II.

The ambush, the strife, and the capture.

THE dawn was slowly breaking over the wide valley of Granada, as Almamen pursued his circuitous and solitary path back to the city. He was now in a dark and entangled hollow, covered with brakes and bushes, from amidst which, tall forest trees rose in frequent intervals, gloomy and breathless in the still morning air. As, emerging from this jungle, if so it may be called, the towers of Granada gleamed upon him, a human countenance peered from the shade; and Almamen started to see two dark eyes fixed upon his own.

He halted abruptly, and put his hand on his dagger, when a low sharp whistle from the apparition before him was answered around — behind; and, ere he could draw breath, the Israelite was begirt by a group of Moors, in the garb of peasants.

“Well, my masters,” said Almamen, calmly, as he encountered the wild savage countenances that glared upon him, “think you there is aught to fear from the solitary santón?”

“It is the magician,” whispered one man to his neighbour — “let him pass.”

“Nay,” was the answer, “take him before the captain; we have orders to seize upon all we meet.”

This counsel prevailed; and, gnashing his teeth with secret rage, Almamen found himself hurried along by the

peasants through the thickest part of the copse. At length the procession stopped in a semicircular patch of rank sward, in which several head of cattle were quietly grazing, and a yet more numerous troop of peasants reclined around upon the grass.

"Whom have we here?" asked a voice which startled back the dark blood from Almamen's cheek; and a Moor of commanding presence rose from the midst of his brethren. "By the beard of the prophet, it is the false santón! What dost thou from Granada at this hour?"

"Noble Muza," returned Almamen — who, though, indeed, amazed that one whom he had imagined his victim was thus unaccountably become his judge, retained, at least, the semblance of composure — "my answer is to be given only to my lord the king; it is his commands that I obey."

"Thou art aware," said Muza, frowning, "that thy life is forfeited without appeal? Whatsoever inmate of Granada is found without the walls between sunrise and sunset, dies the death of a traitor and deserter."

"The servants of the Alhambra are excepted," answered the Israelite; without changing countenance.

"Ah!" muttered Muza, as a painful and sudden thought seemed to cross him, "can it be possible that the rumour of the city has truth, and that the monarch of Granada is in treaty with the foe?" He mused a little; and then, motioning the Moors to withdraw, he continued aloud, "Almamen, answer me truly: hast thou sought the Christian camp with any message from the king?"

"I have not."

"Art thou without the walls on the mission of the king?"

"If I be so, I am a traitor to the king should I reveal his secret."

"I doubt thee much, santón," said Muza, after a pause; "I know thee for my enemy, and I do believe thy counsels have poisoned the king's ear against me, his people, and his duties. But no matter, thy life is spared awhile; thou remainest with us, and with us shalt thou return to the king."

"But, noble Muza ——"

"I have said! Guard the santón; mount him upon one of our chargers; he shall abide with us in our ambush."

While Almamen chafed in vain at his arrest, all in the Christian camp was yet still. At length, as the sun began to lift himself above the mountains, first a murmur, and then a din, betokened warlike preparations. Several parties of horse, under gallant and experienced leaders, formed themselves in different quarters, and departed in different ways, on expeditions of forage, or in the hope of skirmish with the straggling detachments of the enemy. Of these, the best equipped was conducted by the Marquess de Villena, and his gallant brother, Don Alonzo de Pacheco. In this troop, too, rode many of the best blood of Spain; for in that chivalric army, the officers vied with each other who should most eclipse the meaner soldiery in feats of personal valour; and the name of Villena drew around him the eager and ardent spirits that pined at the general inactivity of Ferdinand's politic campaign.

The sun, now high in heaven, glittered on the splendid arms and gorgeous pennons of Villena's company — as, leaving the camp behind, it entered a rich and wooded district that skirts the mountain barrier of the Vega —

the brilliancy of the day, the beauty of the scene, the hope and excitement of enterprise, animated the spirits of the whole party. In these expeditions strict discipline was often abandoned, from the certainty that it could be resumed at need. Conversation, gay and loud, interspersed at times with snatches of song, was heard amongst the soldiery; and in the nobler group that rode with Villena, there was even less of the proverbial gravity of Spaniards.

"Now, marquess," said Don Estevon de Suzon, "what wager shall be between us, as to which lance this day robs Moorish beauty of the greatest number of its worshippers?"

"My falchion against your jennet," said Don Alonzo de Pacheco, taking up the challenge.

"Agreed. But, talking of beauty, were you in the queen's pavilion last night, noble marquess? it was enriched by a new maiden, whose strange and sudden apparition none can account for. Her eyes would have eclipsed the fatal glance of Cava; and, had I been Rodrigo, I might have lost a crown for her smile."

"Ay," said Villena, "I heard of her beauty; some hostage from one of the traitor Moors, with whom the king (the saints bless him!) bargains for the city. They tell me the prince incurred the queen's grave rebuke for his attentions to the maiden."

"And this morning I saw that fearful Father Tomas steal into the prince's tent. I wish Don Juan well through the lecture. The monk's advice is like the algarroba;* when it is laid up to dry it may be reasonably whole-

* The algarroba is a sort of leguminous plant, common in Spain.

some, but it is harsh and bitter enough when taken fresh."

At this moment, one of the subaltern officers rode up to the marquess, and whispered in his ear.

"Ha!" said Villena, "the Virgin be praised! Sir knights, booty is at hand. Silence! close the ranks."

With that, mounting a little eminence, and shading his eyes with his hand, the marquess surveyed the plain below; and, at some distance, he beheld a horde of Moorish peasants driving some cattle into a thick copse. The word was hastily given, the troop dashed on, every voice was hushed, and the clatter of mail, and the sound of hoofs, alone broke the delicious silence of the noon-day landscape. Ere they reached the copse, the peasants had disappeared within it. The marquess marshalled his men in a semicircle round the trees, and sent on a detachment to the rear, to cut off every egress from the wood. This done, the troop dashed within. For the first few yards the space was more open than they had anticipated: but the ground soon grew uneven, rugged, and almost precipitous; and the soil, and the interlaced trees, alike forbade any rapid motion to the horse. Don Alonzo de Pacheco, mounted on a charger whose agile and docile limbs had been tutored to every description of warfare, and himself of light weight, and incomparable horsemanship — dashed on before the rest. The trees hid him for a moment; when, suddenly, a wild yell was heard, and, as it ceased, uprose the solitary voice of the Spaniard, shouting, "*Santiago, y cierra Espana*; St. Jago, and charge, Spain!"

Each cavalier spurred forward; when, suddenly, a shower of darts and arrows rattled on their armour; and upsprung, from bush, and reeds, and rocky clift, a

number of Moors, and with wild shouts swarmed around the Spaniards.

"Back for your lives!" cried Villena, "we are beset — make for the level ground!"

He turned — spurred from the thicket, and saw the Paynim foe emerging through the glen, line after line of man and horse; each Moor leading his slight and fiery steed by the bridle, and leaping on it as he issued from the wood into the plain. Cased in complete mail, his vizor down, his lance in his rest, Villena (accompanied by such of his knights as could disentangle themselves from the Moorish foot) charged upon the foe. A moment of fierce shock passed: on the ground lay many a Moor, pierced through by the Christian lance; and on the other side of the foe, was heard the voice of Villena — "St. Jago to the rescue!" But the brave marquess stood almost alone, save his faithful chamberlain, Solier. Several of his knights were dismounted, and swarms of Moors, with lifted knives, gathered round them as they lay, searching for the joints of the armour, which might admit a mortal wound. Gradually, one by one, many of Villena's comrades joined their leader; and now the green mantle of Don Alonzo de Pacheco was seen waving without the copse, and Villena congratulated himself on the safety of his brother. Just at that moment, a Moorish cavalier spurred from his troop, and met Pacheco in full career. The Moor was not clad, as was the common custom of the Paynim nobles, in the heavy Christian armour. He wore the light flexile mail of the ancient heroes of Araby or Fez. His turban, which was protected by chains of the finest steel interwoven with the folds, was of the most dazzling white — white, also, were his tunic and short mantle; on his left arm hung a

short circular shield, in his right hand was poised a long and slender lance. As this Moor, mounted on a charger in whose raven hue not a white hair could be detected, dashed forward against Pacheco, both Christian and Moor breathed hard, and remained passive. Either nation felt it as a sacrilege to thwart the encounter of champions so renowned.

“God save my brave brother!” muttered Villena, anxiously. “Amen,” said those around him; for all who had ever witnessed the wildest valour in that war, trembled as they recognised the dazzling robe, and coal-black charger, of Muza Ben Abil Gazan. Nor was that renowned infidel mated with an unworthy foe. “Pride of the tournament, and terror of the war,” was the favourite title which the knights and ladies of Castile had bestowed on Don Alonzo de Pacheco.

When the Spaniard saw the redoubted Moor approach, he halted abruptly for a moment, and then, wheeling his horse round, took a wider circuit to give additional impetus to his charge. The Moor, aware of his purpose, halted also, and awaited the moment of his rush; when once more he darted forward, and the combatants met with a skill which called forth a cry of involuntary applause from the Christians themselves. Muza received on the small surface of his shield the ponderous spear of Alonzo, while his own light lance struck upon the helmet of the Christian, and, by the exactness of the aim, rather than the weight of the blow, made Alonzo reel in his saddle.

The lances were thrown aside — the long broad falchion of the Christian, the curved Damascus cimeter of the Moor, gleamed in the air. They reined their chargers opposite each other in grave and deliberate silence.

"Yield thee, sir knight!" at length cried the fierce Moor, "for the motto on my cimeter declares, that if thou meetest its stroke, thy days are numbered. The sword of the believer is the Key of Heaven and Hell." *

"False Paynim," answered Alonzo, in a voice that rung hollow through his helmet, "a Christian knight is the equal of a Moorish army!"

Muza made no reply, but left the rein of his charger on his neck; the noble animal understood the signal, and, with a short impatient cry, rushed forward at full speed. Alonzo met the charge with his falchion upraised, and his whole body covered with his shield: the Moor bent — the Spaniards raised a shout — Muza seemed stricken from his horse. But the blow of the heavy falchion had not touched him; and, seemingly without an effort, the curved blade of his own cimeter, gliding by that part of his antagonist's throat where the helmet joins the cuirass, passed unresistingly and silently through the joints; and Alonzo fell at once, and without a groan, from his horse — his armour, to all appearance, unpenetrated, while the blood oozed slow and gurgling from a mortal wound.

"Allah il Allah!" shouted Muza, as he joined his friends; "Lelilies! Lelilies!" echoed the Moors; and, ere the Christians recovered their dismay, they were engaged hand to hand with their ferocious and swarming foes. It was, indeed, fearful odds; and it was a marvel to the Spaniards, how the Moors had been enabled to harbour and conceal their numbers in so small a space. Horse and foot alike beset the company of Villena, already sadly reduced; and, while the infantry, with desperate and savage fierceness, thrust themselves under the very bellies

* Such, says Sale, is the poetical phrase of the Mahometan divines.

of the chargers, encountering both the hoofs of the steed and the deadly lance of the rider, in the hope of finding a vulnerable place for the sharp Moorish knife, — the horsemen, avoiding the stern grapple of the Spanish warriors, harassed them by the shaft and lance — now advancing, now retreating, and performing, with incredible rapidity, the evolutions of oriental cavalry. But the life and soul of his party was the indomitable Muza. With a rashness which seemed to the superstitious Spaniards like the safety of a man protected by magic, he spurred his ominous black barb into the very midst of the serried phalanx which Villena endeavoured to form around him, breaking the order by his single charge, and from time to time bringing to the dust some champion of the troop, by the noiseless and scarce-seen edge of his fatal cimeter.

Villena, in despair alike of fame and life, and gnawed with grief for his brother's loss, at length resolved to put the last hope of the battle on his single arm. He gave the signal for retreat; and, to protect his troop, remained himself, alone and motionless on his horse, like a statue of iron. Though not of large frame, he was esteemed the best swordsman, next only to Hernando del Pulgar and Gonsalvo de Cordova, in the army; practised alike in the heavy assault of the Christian warfare, and the rapid and dexterous exercise of the Moorish cavalry. There he remained, alone and grim — a lion at bay — while his troops slowly retreated down the Vega, and their trumpets sounded loud signals of distress, and demands for succour, to such of their companions as might be within hearing. Villena's armour defied the shafts of the Moors; and as one after one darted towards him, with whirling cimeter and momentary assault, few escap-

ed with impunity, from an eye equally quick, and a weapon more than equally formidable. Suddenly a cloud of dust swept towards him; and Muza, a moment before at the further end of the field, came glittering through that cloud, with his white robe waving, and his right arm bare. Villena recognised him, set his teeth hard, and, putting spurs to his charger, met the rush. Muza swerved aside, just as the heavy falchion swung over his head, and, by a back stroke of his own cimeter, shore through the cuirass just above the hip-joint, and the blood followed the blade. The brave cavaliers saw the danger of their chief; three of their number darted forward, and came in time to separate the combatants.

Muza stayed not to encounter the new reinforcement; but, speeding across the plain, was soon seen rallying his own scattered cavalry, and pouring them down, in one general body, upon the scanty remnant of the Spaniards.

"Our day is come!" said the good knight Villena, with bitter resignation. "Nothing is left for us, my friends, but to give up our lives — an example how Spanish warriors should live and die. May God and the Holy Mother forgive our sins, and shorten our purgatory!"

Just as he spoke, a clarion was heard at a distance; and the sharpened senses of the knights caught the ring of advancing hoofs.

"We are saved!" cried Estevon de Suzon, rising on his stirrups. While he spoke, the dashing stream of the Spanish horse broke over the little band; and Estevon beheld, bent upon himself, the dark eyes and quivering lip of Muza Ben Abil Gazan. That noble knight had never, perhaps, till then known fear; but

he felt his heart stand still, as he now stood opposed to that irresistible foe.

"The dark fiend guides his blade!" thought De Suzon; "but I was shriven but yesternorn." The thought restored his wonted courage, and he spurred on to meet the cimiter of the Moor.

His assault took Muza by surprise. The Moor's horse stumbled over the ground, cumbered with the dead and slippery with blood, and his uplifted cimiter could not do more than break the force of the gigantic arm of De Suzon; as the knight's falchion, bearing down the cimiter, and alighting on the turban of the Mahometan, clove midway through its folds, arrested only by the admirable temper of the links of steel which protected it. The shock hurled the Moor to the ground. He rolled under the saddle-girths of his antagonist.

"Victory and St. Jago!" cried the knight, "Muza is —"

The sentence was left eternally unfinished. The blade of the fallen Moor had already pierced De Suzon's horse through a mortal but undefended part. It fell, bearing his rider with him. A moment, and the two champions lay together grappling in the dust; in the next, the short knife, which the Moor wore in his girdle, had penetrated the Christian's vizor, passing through the brain.

To remount his steed, that remained at hand, humbled and motionless, to appear again amongst the thickest of the fray, was a work no less rapidly accomplished than had been the slaughter of the unhappy Estevon de Suzon. But now the fortune of the day

was stopped in a progress hitherto so triumphant to the Moors.

Pricking fast over the plain, were seen the glittering horsemen of the Christian reinforcements; and, at the remoter distance, the royal banner of Spain, indistinctly descried through volumes of dust, denoted that Ferdinand himself was advancing to the support of his cavaliers.

The Moors, however, who had themselves received many and mysterious reinforcements, which seemed to spring up like magic from the bosom of the earth—so suddenly and unexpectedly had they emerged from copse and cleft in that mountainous and entangled neighbourhood — were not unprepared for a fresh foe. At the command of the vigilant Muza, they drew off, fell into order, and, seizing, while yet there was time, the vantage-ground which inequalities of the soil and the shelter of the trees gave to their darts and agile horse, they presented an array which Ponce de Leon himself, who now arrived, deemed it more prudent not to assault. While Villena, in accents almost inarticulate with rage, was urging the Marquess of Cadiz to advance, Ferdinand, surrounded by the flower of his court, arrived at the rear of the troops; and, after a few words interchanged with Ponce de Leon, gave the signal of retreat.

When the Moors beheld that noble soldiery slowly breaking ground, and retiring towards the camp, even Muza could not control their ardour. They rushed forward, harassing the retreat of the Christians, and delaying the battle by various skirmishes.

It was at this time that the headlong valour of Hernando del Pulgar, who had arrived with Ponce

de Leon, distinguished itself in feats which yet live in the songs of Spain. Mounted upon an immense steed, and himself of colossal strength, he was seen charging alone upon the assailants, and scattering numbers to the ground with the sweep of his enormous and two-handed falchion. With a loud voice, he called on Muza to oppose him; but the Moor, fatigued with slaughter, and scarcely recovered from the shock of his encounter with De Suzon, reserved so formidable a foe for a future contest.

It was at this juncture, while the field was covered with straggling skirmishers, that a small party of Spaniards, in cutting their way to the main body of their countrymen through one of the numerous copses held by the enemy, fell in at the outskirt with an equal number of Moors, and engaged them in a desperate conflict, hand to hand. Amidst the infidels was one man who took no part in the affray: at a little distance, he gazed for a few moments upon the fierce and relentless slaughter of Moor and Christian with a smile of stern and complacent delight; and then, taking advantage of the general confusion, rode gently, and, as he hoped, unobserved, away from the scene. But he was not destined so quietly to escape. A Spaniard perceived him, and, from something strange and unusual in his garb, judged him one of the Moorish leaders; and presently Almamen, for it was he, beheld before him the uplifted falchion of a foe neither disposed to give quarter nor to hear parley. Brave though the Israelite was, many reasons concurred to prevent his taking a personal part against the soldier of Spain; and, seeing he should have no chance of explanation, he fairly put spurs to his horse, and galloped across

the plain. The Spaniard followed, gained upon him, and Almamen at length turned, in despair and the wrath of his haughty nature.

"Have thy will, fool!" said he, between his grinded teeth, as he griped his dagger and prepared for the conflict. It was long and obstinate; for the Spaniard was skilful; and the Hebrew, wearing no mail, and without any weapon more formidable than a sharp and well-tempered dagger, was forced to act cautiously on the defensive. At length the combatants grappled, and, by a dexterous thrust, the short blade of Almamen pierced the throat of his antagonist, who fell prostrate to the ground.

"I am safe," he thought, as he wheeled round his horse; when, lo! the Spaniards he had just left behind, and who had now routed their antagonists, were upon him.

"Yield, or die!" cried the leader of the troop.

Almamen glared round; no succour was at hand. "I am not your enemy," said he, sullenly, throwing down his weapon — "bear me to your camp."

A trooper seized his rein, and, scouring along, the Spaniards soon reached the retreating army.

Meanwhile the evening darkened, the shout and the roar grew gradually less loud and loud — the battle had ceased — the stragglers had joined their several standards; and, by the light of the first star, the Moorish force, bearing their wounded brethren, and elated with success, re-entered the gates of Granada, as the black charger of the hero of the day, closing the rear of the cavalry, disappeared within the gloomy portals.

CHAPTER III.

The hero in the power of the Dreamer.

It was in the same chamber, and nearly at the same hour, in which we first presented to the reader Boabdil El Chico, that we are again admitted to the presence of that ill-starred monarch. He was not alone. His favourite slave, Amine, reclined upon the ottomans, gazing with anxious love upon his thoughtful countenance, as he leant against the glittering wall by the side of the casement, gazing abstractedly on the scene below.

From afar he heard the shouts of the populace at the return of Muza, and bursts of artillery confirmed the tidings of triumph which had already been borne to his ear.

"May the king live for ever!" said Amine, timidly; "his armies have gone forth to conquer."

"But without their king," replied Boabdil, bitterly, "and headed by a traitor and a foe. I am meshed in the nets of an inextricable fate!"

"Oh!" said the slave, with sudden energy, as, clasping her hands, she rose from her couch, — "oh, my lord! would that these humble lips dared utter other words than those of love!"

"And what wise counsel would they give me?" asked Boabdil, with a faint smile. "Speak on."

"I will obey thee, then, even if it displease," cried Amine; and she rose, her cheek glowing, her eyes spark-

ling, her beautiful form dilated. "I am a daughter of Granada; I am the beloved of a king; I will be true to my birth and to my fortunes. Boabdil El Chico, the last of a line of heroes, shake off these gloomy fantasies — these doubts and dreams that smother the fire of a great nature and a kingly soul! Awake — arise — rob Granada of her Muza — be thyself her Muza! Trustest thou to magic and to spells? grave them, then, on thy breastplate, write them on thy sword, and live no longer the Dreamer of the Alhambra; become the saviour of thy people!"

Boabdil turned, and gazed on the inspired and beautiful form before him with mingled emotions of surprise and shame. "Out of the mouth of woman cometh my rebuke!" said he, sadly. "It is well!"

"Pardon me, pardon me!" said the slave, falling humbly at his knees; "but blame me not that I would have thee worthy of thyself. Wert thou not happier, was not thy heart more light, and thy hope more strong, when at the head of thine armies, thine own cimenter slew thine own foes, and the terror of the Hero-King spread, in flame and slaughter, from the mountains to the seas. Boabdil! dear as thou art to me — equally as I would have loved thee hadst thou been born a lowly fisherman of the Darro, — since thou art a king, I would have thee die a king; even if my own heart broke as I armed thee for thy latest battle!"

"Thou knowest not what thou sayest, Amine," said Boabdil, "nor canst thou tell what spirits that are not of earth dictate to the actions, and watch over the destinies, of the rulers of nations. If I delay, if I linger, it is not from terror, but from wisdom. The cloud

must gather on, dark and slow, ere the moment for the thunderbolt arrives."

"On thine house will the thunderbolt fall, since over thine own house thou sufferest the cloud to gather," said a calm and stern voice.

Boabdil started; and in the chamber stood a third person, in the shape of a woman, past middle age, and of commanding port and stature. Upon her long-descending robes of embroidered purple, were thickly woven jewels of royal price; and her dark hair, slightly tinged with gray, parted over a majestic brow, while a small diadem surmounted the folds of the turban.

"My mother!" said Boabdil, with some haughty reserve in his tone, "your presence is unexpected."

"Ay," answered Ayxa la Horra, for it was indeed that celebrated, and haughty, and high-souled queen, "and unwelcome; so is ever that of your true friends. But not thus unwelcome was the presence of your mother, when her brain and her hand delivered you from the dungeon in which your stern father had cast your youth, and the dagger and the bowl seemed the only keys that would unlock the cell."

"And better hadst thou left the ill-omened son that thy womb conceived, to die thus in youth, honoured and lamented, than to live to manhood, wrestling against an evil star and a relentless fate."

"Son," said the queen, gazing upon him with lofty and half disdainful compassion, "men's conduct shapes out their own fortunes, and the unlucky are never the valiant and the wise."

"Madam," said Boabdil, colouring with passion, "I am still a king, nor will I be thus bearded — withdraw!"

Ere the queen could reply, an eunuch entered, and whispered Boabdil.

“Ha!” said he joyfully, stamping his foot, “comes he then to brave the lion in his den? Let the rebel look to it. Is he alone?”

“Alone, great king.”

“Bid my guards wait without; let the slightest signal summon them. Amine, retire! Madam —”

“Son!” interrupted Ayxa la Horra, in visible agitation, “do I guess aright? is the brave Muza — the sole bulwark and hope of Granada — whom unjustly thou wouldst last night have placed in chains — (chains! great prophet! is it thus a king should reward his heroes!) — is, I say, Muza here? and wilt thou make him the victim of his own generous trust?”

“Retire, woman!” said Boabdil, sullenly.

“I will not, save by force! I resisted a fiercer soul than thine when I saved thee from thy father.”

“Remain, then, if thou wilt, and learn how kings can punish traitors. Mesnour, admit the hero of Granada.”

Amine had vanished. Boabdil seated himself on the cushions — his face calm, but pale. The queen stood erect at a little distance, her arms folded on her breast, and her aspect knit and resolute. In a few moments Muza entered, alone. He approached the king with the profound salutation of oriental obeisance; and then stood before him, with downcast eyes, in an attitude from which respect could not divorce a natural dignity and pride of mien.

“Prince,” said Boabdil, after a moment’s pause, “yestermorn, when I sent for thee, thou didst brave my orders. Even in mine own Alhambra thy minions

broke out in mutiny; they surrounded the fortress in which thou wert to wait my pleasure; they intercepted, they insulted, they drove back my guards; they stormed the towers protected by the banner of thy king. The governor, a coward or a traitor, rendered thee to the rebellious crowd. Was this all? No, by the prophet! Thou, by right my captive, didst leave thy prison but to head mine armies. And this day, the traitor subject, — the secret foe — was the leader of the people who defy a king. This night thou comest to me unsought. Thou feelest secure from my just wrath, even in my palace. Thine insolence blinds and betrays thee. Man, thou art in my power! Ho, there!”

As the king spoke, he rose; and, presently, the arcades at the back of the pavilion were darkened by long lines of the Ethiopian guard, each of height which, beside the slight Moorish race, appeared gigantic; stolid and passionless machines, to execute, without thought, the bloodiest or the lightest caprice of despotism. There they stood; their silver breast-plates and long ear-rings, contrasting their dusky skins; and bearing, over their shoulders, immense clubs studded with brazen nails. A little advanced from the rest, stood the captain, with the fatal bowstring hanging carelessly on his arm, and his eyes intent to catch the slightest gesture of the king.

“Behold!” said Boabdil to his prisoner.

“I do; and am prepared for what I have foreseen.”

The queen grew pale, but continued silent.

Muza resumed —

“Lord of the faithful!” said he, “if yesternorn I had acted otherwise, it would have been to the ruin of thy throne and our common race. The fierce zegrís suspected and learned my capture. They summoned the

troops — they delivered me, it was true. At that time, had I reasoned with them, it would have been as drops upon a flame. They were bent on besieging thy palace, perhaps upon demanding thy abdication. I could not stifle their fury, but I could direct it. In the moment of passion, I led them from rebellion against our common king to victory against our common foe. That duty done, I come unscathed from the sword of the Christian to bare my neck to the bowstring of my friend. Alone, untracked, unsuspected, I have entered thy palace, to prove to the sovereign of Granada, that the defendant of his throne is not a rebel to his will. Now summon the guards — I have done.”

“Muza!” said Boabdil, in a softened voice, while he shaded his face with his hand, “we played together as children, and I have loved thee well: my kingdom even now, perchance, is passing from me, but I could almost be reconciled to that loss, if I thought thy loyalty had not left me.”

“Dost thou, in truth, suspect the faith of Muza Ben Abil Gazan?” said the Moorish prince, in a tone of surprise and sorrow. “Unhappy king! I deemed that my services, and not my defection, made my crime.”

“Why do my people hate me? why do my armies menace?” said Boabdil, evasively; “why should a subject possess that allegiance which a king cannot obtain?”

“Because,” replied Muza, boldly, “the king has delegated to a subject the command he should himself assume. Oh Boabdil!” he continued, passionately — “friend of my boyhood, ere the evil days came upon us, — gladly would I sink to rest beneath the dark waves of yonder river, if thy arm and brain would fill

up my place amongst the warriors of Granada. And think not I say this only from our boyish love; think not I have placed my life in thy hands only from that servile loyalty to a single man, which the false chivalry of Christendom imposes as a sacred creed upon its knights and nobles. But I speak and act but from one principle — to save the religion of my father and the land of my birth: for this I have risked my life against the foe; for this I surrender my life to the sovereign of my country. Granada may yet survive, if monarch and people unite together. Granada is lost for ever, if her children, at this fatal hour, are divided against themselves. If, then, I, O Boabdil! am the true obstacle to thy league with thine own subjects, give me at once to the bowstring, and my sole prayer shall be for the last remnant of the Moorish name, and the last monarch of the Moorish dynasty.”

“My son, my son! art thou convinced at last?” cried the queen, struggling with her tears; for she was one who wept easily at heroic sentiments, but never at the softer sorrows, or from the more womanly emotions.

Boabdil lifted his head with a vain and momentary attempt at pride; his eye glanced from his mother to his friend, and his better feelings gushed upon him with irresistible force: he threw himself into Muza’s arms.

“Forgive me,” he said, in broken accents, “forgive me! How could I have wronged thee thus? Yes,” he continued, as he started from the noble breast on which for a moment he indulged no ungenerous weakness, — “yes, prince, your example shames, but it fires me. Granada henceforth shall have two chieftains; and if I be jealous of thee, it shall be from an emulation thou canst not blame. Guards, retire. Mesnour! ho, Mes-

nour! Proclaim at daybreak that I myself will review the troops in the Vivarrambla. Yet," — and, as he spoke, his voice faltered, and his brow became overcast, — "yet, stay; seek me thyself at day-break, and I will give thee my commands."

"Oh, my son! why hesitate?" cried the queen, "why waver? Prosecute thine own kingly designs, and —"

"Hush, madam," said Boabdil, regaining his customary cold composure; "and, since you are now satisfied with your son, leave me alone with Muza."

The queen sighed heavily; but there was something in the calm of Boabdil which chilled and awed her more than his bursts of passion. She drew her veil around her, and passed slowly and reluctantly from the chamber.

"Muza," said Boabdil, when alone with the prince, and fixing his large and thoughtful eyes upon the dark orbs of his companion, — "when, in our younger days, we conversed together, do you remember how often that converse turned upon those solemn and mysterious themes to which the sages of our ancestral land directed their deepest lore; the enigmas of the stars — the science of fate — the wild researches into the clouded future, which wombs the destinies of nations and of men? Thou rememberest, Muza, that to such studies mine own vicissitudes and sorrows, even in childhood — the strange fortunes which gave me in my cradle the epithet of El Zogoybi — the ominous predictions of san-tons and astrologers as to the trials of my earthly fate, — all contributed to incline my soul. Thou didst not despise those earnest musings, nor our ancestral lore, though, unlike me, ever more inclined to action than to contemplation, that which thou mightest believe, had little influence upon what thou didst design. With me

it hath been otherwise : every event of life hath conspired to feed my early prepossessions ; and, in this awful crisis of my fate, I have placed myself and my throne, rather under the guardianship of spirits than of men. This alone has reconciled me to inaction — to the torpor of the Alhambra — to the mutinies of my people. I have smiled, when foes surrounded and friends deserted me, secure of the aid at last — if I bided but the fortunate hour of the charms of protecting spirits, and the swords of the invisible creation. Thou wonderest what this should lead to. Listen ! Two nights since (and the king shuddered) I was with the dead ! My father appeared before me — not as I knew him in life — gaunt and terrible, full of the vigour of health, and the strength of kingly empire, and of fierce passion — but wan, calm, shadowy. From lips on which Azrael had set his livid seal, he bade me beware of *thee* !”

The king ceased suddenly ; and sought to read, on the face of Muza, the effect his words produced. But the proud and swarthy features of the Moor evinced no pang of conscience ; a slight smile of pity might have crossed his lip for a moment, but it vanished ere the king could detect it. Boabdil continued.

“Under the influence of this warning, I issued the order for thy arrest. Let this pass — I resume my tale. I attempted to throw myself at the spectre’s feet, — it glided from me, motionless and impalpable. I asked the Dead One if he forgave his unhappy son the sin of rebellion — alas ! too well requited even upon earth. And the voice again came forth, and bade me keep the crown that I had gained, as the sole atonement for the past. Then again I asked, whether the hour for action had arrived ? and the spectre, while it faded gradually

into air, answered, 'No!' 'Oh!' I exclaimed, 'ere thou leavest me, be one sign accorded me, that I have not dreamt this vision; and give me, I pray thee, note and warning, when the evil star of Boabdil shall withhold its influence, and he may strike, without resistance from the powers above, for his glory and his throne.' 'The sign and the warning are bequeathed thee,' answered the ghostly image. It vanished, — thick darkness fell around; and, when once more the light of the lamps we bore became visible, behold there stood before me a skeleton, in the regal robe of the kings of Granada, and on its grisly head was the imperial diadem. With one hand raised, it pointed to the opposite wall, wherein burned, like an orb of gloomy fire, a broad dial-plate, on which were graven these words, 'BEWARE — FEAR NOT — ARM!' the finger of the dial moved rapidly round, and rested at the word, *beware*. From that hour to the one in which I last beheld it, it hath not moved. Muza, the tale is done; wilt thou visit with me this enchanted chamber, and see if the hour be come?"

"Commander of the faithful," said Muza, "the story is dread and awful. But pardon thy friend — wert thou alone, or was the santón Almamen thy companion?"

"Why the question?" said Boabdil, evasively, and slightly colouring.

"I fear his truth," answered Muza; "the Christian king conquers more foes by craft than force: and his spies are more deadly than his warriors. Wherefore this caution against me, but (pardon me) for thine own undoing? Were I a traitor, could Ferdinand himself have endangered thy crown so imminently as the revenge of the leader of thine own armies? Why, too, this desire to keep thee inactive? For the brave every hour

hath its chances; but, for us, every hour increases our peril. If we seize not the present time, our supplies are cut off, — and famine is a foe all our valour cannot resist. This dervise — who is he? a stranger, not of our race and blood. But this morning I found him without the walls, nor far from the Spaniards' camp."

"Ha!" cried the king, quickly, "and what said he?"

"Little, but in hints; sheltering himself, by those hints, under thy name."

"He! what dared he own? — Muza, what were these hints?"

The Moor here recounted the interview with Almacen, his detention, his inactivity in the battle, and his subsequent capture by the Spaniards. The king listened attentively, and regained his composure.

"It is a strange and awful man," said he, after a pause. "Guards and chains will not detain him. Ere long he will return. But thou, at least, Muza, art henceforth free, alike from the suspicion of the living, and the warnings of the dead. No, my friend," continued Boabdil, with generous warmth; "it is better to lose a crown, to lose life itself, than confidence in a heart like thine. Come, let us inspect this magic tablet; perchance — and how my heart bounds as I utter the hope! — the hour may have arrived."

CHAPTER IV.

A fuller view of the character of Boabdil — Muza in the gardens of his Beloved.

MUZA BEN ABIL GAZAN returned from his visit to Boabdil with a thoughtful and depressed spirit. His arguments had failed to induce the king to disdain the command of the magic dial, which still forbade him to arm against the invaders; and although the royal favour was no longer withdrawn from himself, the Moor felt that such favour hung upon a capricious and uncertain tenure so long as his sovereign was the slave of superstition or imposture. But that noble warrior, whose character the adversity of his country had singularly exalted and refined, even while increasing its natural fierceness, thought little of himself in comparison with the evils and misfortunes which the king's continued irresolution must bring upon Granada.

"So brave, and yet so weak (thought he); so weak, and yet so obstinate; so wise a reasoner, yet so credulous a dupe! Unhappy Boabdil! the stars, indeed, seem to fight against thee, and their influence at thy birth marred all thy gifts and virtues with counteracting infirmity and error."

Muza — more, perhaps, than any subject in Granada, — did justice to the real character of the king; but even he was unable to penetrate all its complicated and latent mysteries. Boabdil El Chico was no ordinary

man: his affections were warm and generous, his nature calm and gentle; and, though early power, and the painful experience of a mutinous people and ungrateful court, had imparted to that nature an irascibility of temper, and a quickness of suspicion, foreign to its earlier soil, he was easily led back to generosity and justice; and, if warm in resentment, was magnanimous in forgiveness. Deeply accomplished in all the learning of his race and time, he was — in books, at least — a philosopher; and, indeed, his attachment to the abstruser studies was one of the main causes which unfitted him for his present station. But it was the circumstances attendant on his birth and childhood that had perverted his keen and graceful intellect to morbid indulgence in mystic reveries, and all the doubt, fear, and irresolution of a man who pushes metaphysics into the supernatural world. Dark prophecies accumulated omens over his head; men united in considering him born to disastrous destinies. Whenever he had sought to wrestle against hostile circumstances, some seemingly accidental cause, sudden and unforeseen, had blasted the labours of his most vigorous energy, — the fruit of his most deliberate wisdom. Thus, by degrees, a gloomy and despairing cloud settled over his mind; but, secretly sceptical of the Mahometan creed, and too proud and sanguine to resign himself wholly and passively to the doctrine of inevitable predestination, he sought to contend against the machinations of hostile demons and boding stars, not by human but spiritual agencies. Collecting around him the seers and magicians of orient fanaticism, he lived in the visions of another world; and, flattered by the promises of impostors or dreamers, and deceived by his own subtle and brooding tendencies of mind, it was amongst spells and cabala that

he thought to draw forth the mighty secret which was to free him from the meshes of the perternatural enemies of his fortune, and leave him the freedom of other men to wrestle, with equal chances, against peril and adversities. It was thus that Alnamen had won the mastery of his mind ; and, though upon matters of common and earthly import, or solid learning, Boabdil could contend with sages, upon those of superstition he could be fooled by a child. He was, in this, a kind of Hamlet: formed, under prosperous and serene fortunes, to render blessings and reap renown ; but over whom the chilling shadow of another world had fallen — whose soul curdled back into itself — whose life had been separated from that of the herd — whom doubts and awe drew back, while circumstances impelled onward — whom a supernatural doom invested with a peculiar philosophy, not of human effect and cause — and who, with every gift that could ennoble and adorn, was suddenly palsied into that moral imbecility, which is almost ever the result of mortal visitings into the haunted regions of the Ghostly and Unknown. The gloomier colourings of his mind had been deepened, too, by secret remorse. For the preservation of his own life, constantly threatened by his unnatural predecessor, he had been early driven into rebellion against his father. In age, infirmity, and blindness, that fierce king had been made a prisoner at Salobrena by his brother, El Zagal, Boabdil's partner in rebellion ; and dying suddenly, El Zagal was suspected of his murder. Though Boabdil was innocent of such a crime, he felt himself guilty of the causes which led to it ; and a dark memory, resting upon his conscience, served to augment his superstition and enervate the vigour of his resolves ; for, of all

things that make men dreamers, none is so effectual as remorse operating upon a thoughtful temperament.

Revolving the character of his sovereign, and sadly foreboding the ruin of his country, the young hero of Granada pursued his way, until his steps, almost unconsciously, led him towards the abode of Leila. He scaled the walls of the garden as before — he neared the house. All was silent and deserted: his signal was unanswered — his murmured song brought no grateful light to the lattice, no fairy footstep to the balcony. Dejected, and sad of heart, he retired from the spot; and, returning home, sought a couch, to which even all the fatigue and excitement he had undergone, could not win the forgetfulness of slumber. The mystery that wrapt the maiden of his homage, the rareness of their interviews, and the wild and poetical romance that made a very principle of the chivalry of the Spanish Moors, had imparted to Muza's love for Leila a passionate depth, which, at this day, and in more enervated climes, is unknown to the Mahometan lover. His keenest inquiries had been unable to pierce the secret of her birth and station. Little of the inmates of that guarded and lonely house was known in the neighbourhood: the only one ever seen without its walls was an old man of the Jewish faith, supposed to be a superintendent of the foreign slaves (for no Mahometan slave would have been subjected to the insult of submission to a Jew); and, though there were rumours of the vast wealth and gorgeous luxury within the mansion, it was supposed the abode of some Moorish emir absent from the city — and the interest of the gossips was at this time absorbed in more weighty matters than the affairs of a neighbour. But when, the next eve, and the next, Muza returned to the spot equally in

vain, his impatience and alarm could no longer be restrained; he resolved to lie in watch by the portals of the house night and day, until, at least, he could discover some one of the inmates, whom he could question of his love, and perhaps bribe to his service. As with this resolution he was hovering round the mansion, he beheld, stealing from a small door in one of the low wings of the house, a bended and decrepit form: it supported its steps upon a staff; and, as now entering the garden, it stooped by the side of a fountain to cull flowers and herbs by the light of the moon, the Moor almost started to behold a countenance which resembled that of some ghoul or vampire haunting the places of the dead. He smiled at his own fear; and, with a quick and stealthy pace, hastened through the trees, and, gaining the spot where the old man bent, placed his hand on his shoulder ere his presence was perceived.

Ximen, for it was he, looked round eagerly, and a faint cry of terror broke from his lips.

"Hush!" said the Moor; "fear me not, I am a friend. Thou art old, man — gold is ever welcome to the aged." As he spoke, he dropped several broad pieces into the breast of the Jew, whose ghastly features gave forth a yet more ghastly smile as he received the gift, and mumbled forth.

"Charitable young man! generous, benevolent, excellent young man!"

"Now then," said Muza, "tell me — you belong to this house — Leila, the maiden within — tell me of her — is she well?"

"I trust so," returned the Jew; "I trust |so, noble master."

"Trust so! *know* you not of her state?"

"Not I; for many nights I have not seen her, excellent sir," answered Ximen; "she hath left Granada, she hath gone. You waste your time, and mar your precious health amidst these nightly dews; they are unwholesome, very unwholesome, at the time of the new moon."

"Gone!" echoed the Moor; "left Granada! — who is she! — and whither? there, there, more gold for you, — old man, tell me whither?"

"Alas! I know not, most magnanimous young man; I am but servant, I know nothing."

"When will she return?"

"I cannot tell thee."

"Who is thy master? who owns yon mansion?"

Ximen's countenance fell; he looked round in doubt and fear, and then, after a short pause, answered, — "A wealthy man, good sir — a Moor of Africa; but he hath also gone; he but seldom visits us; Granada is not so peaceful a residence as it was, — I would go too, if I could."

Muza released his hold of Ximen, who gazed at the Moor's working countenance with a malignant smile — for Ximen hated all men.

"Thou hast done with me, young warrior? Pleasant dreams to thee under the new moon — thou hadst best retire to thy bed. Farewell! bless thy charity to the poor old man!"

Muza heard him not; he remained motionless for some moments; and then with a heavy sigh, as that of one who has gained the mastery of himself after a bitter struggle, he said, half-aloud, "Allah be with thee, Leila! Granada now is my only mistress."

CHAPTER V.

Boabdil's reconciliation with his people.

SEVERAL days had elapsed without any encounter between Moor and Christian; for Ferdinand's cold and sober policy, warned by the loss he had sustained in the ambush of Muza, was now bent on preserving rigorous restraint upon the fiery spirits he commanded. He forbade all parties of skirmish, in which the Moors, indeed, had usually gained the advantage, and contented himself with occupying all the passes through which provisions could arrive at the besieged city. He commenced strong fortifications around his camp; and, forbidding assault on the Moors, defied it against himself.

Meanwhile, Almamen had not returned to Granada. No tidings of his fate reached the king; and his prolonged disappearance began to produce visible and salutary effect upon the long dormant energies of Boabdil. The counsels of Muza, the exhortations of the queen-mother, the enthusiasm of his mistress, Amine, uncounteracted by the arts of the magician, aroused the torpid lion of his nature. But still his army and his subjects murmured against him; and his appearance in the Vivarrambla might, possibly, be the signal of revolt. It was at this time that a most fortunate circumstance at once restored to him the confidence and affections of his people. His stern uncle, El

Zagal — once a rival for his crown, and whose daring valour, mature age, and military sagacity, had won him a powerful party within the city — had been, some months since, conquered by Ferdinand; and, in yielding the possessions he held, had been rewarded with a barren and dependent principality. His defeat, far from benefiting Boabdil, had exasperated the Moors against their king. “For,” said they, almost with one voice, “the brave El Zagal never would have succumbed had Boabdil properly supported his arms.” And it was the popular discontent and rage at El Zagal’s defeat, which had, indeed, served Boabdil with a reasonable excuse for shutting himself in the strong fortress of the Alhambra. It now happened, that El Zagal, whose dominant passion was hatred of his nephew, and whose fierce nature chafed at its present cage, resolved, in his old age, to blast all his former fame by a signal treason to his country. Forgetting every thing but revenge against his nephew, whom he was resolved should share his own ruin, he armed his subjects, crossed the country, and appeared at the head of a gallant troop in the Spanish camp, an ally with Ferdinand against Granada. When this was heard by the Moors, it is impossible to conceive their indignant wrath; the crime of El Zagal produced an instantaneous reaction in favour of Boabdil; the crowd surrounded the Alhambra, and with prayers and tears entreated the forgiveness of the king. This event completed the conquest of Boabdil over his own irresolution. He ordained an assembly of the whole army in the broad space of the Vivarrambla: and when, at break of day, he appeared in full armour in the square, with Muza at his right hand, himself in the flower of youthful beauty, and proud to feel

once more a hero and a king, the joy of the people knew no limit; the air was rent with cries of "Long live Boabdil el Chico!" and the young monarch, turning to Muza, with all his soul upon his brow, exclaimed, "The hour has come — I am no longer El Zogoybi!"

CHAPTER VI.

Leila — Her new Lover — Portrait of the first inquisitor of Spain — The chalice returned to the lips of Almamen.

WHILE thus the state of events within Granada, the course of our story transports us back to the Christian camp. It was in one of a long line of tents, that skirted the pavilion of Isabel, and was appropriated to the ladies attendant on the royal presence, that a young female sate alone. The dusk of evening already gathered around, and only the outline of her form and features was visible. But even that, imperfectly seen,—the dejected attitude of the form, the drooping head, the hands clasped upon the knees, — might have sufficed to denote the melancholy nature of the reverie which the maid indulged.

"Ah" thought she, "to what danger am I exposed! It my father, if my lover dreamed of the persecution to which their poor Leila is abandoned!"

A few tears, large and bitter, broke from her eyes, and stole unheeded down her cheek. At that moment, the deep and musical chime of a bell was heard summoning the chiefs of the army to prayer; for Ferdinand

invested all his worldly schemes with a religious covering, and to his politic war he sought to give the imposing character of a sacred crusade.

"That sound," thought she, sinking on her knees, "summons the Nazarenes to the presence of their God. It reminds me, a captive by the waters of Babylon, that God is ever with the friendless. Oh! succour and defend me, Thou who didst look of old upon Ruth standing amidst the corn, and didst watch over thy chosen people in the hungry wilderness, and in the stranger's land."

Wrapt in her mute and passionate devotions, Leila remained long in her touching posture. The bell had ceased; all without was hushed and still — when the drapery, stretched across the opening of the tent, was lifted, and a young Spaniard, cloaked, from head to foot, in a long mantle, stood within the space. He gazed, in silence, upon the kneeling maiden; nor was it until she rose that he made his presence audible.

"Ah, fairest!" said he, then, as he attempted to take her hand, "thou wilt not answer my letters — see me, then, at thy feet. It is thou who teachest me to kneel."

"You, prince!" said Leila, agitated, and in great and evident fear. — "Why harass and insult me thus? Am I not that sacred thing — a hostage and a charge? and is name, honour, peace, all that woman is taught to hold most dear, to be thus robbed from me, under the name of a love, dishonouring to thee, and an insult to myself?"

"Sweet one," answered Don Juan, with a slight laugh, "thou hast learned, within yonder walls, a creed of morals little known to Moorish maidens, if

fame belies them not. Suffer me to teach thee easier morality and sounder logic. It is no dishonour to a Christian prince to adore beauty like thine; it is no insult to a maiden hostage if the Infant of Spain proffer her the homage of his heart. But we waste time. Spies, and envious tongues, and vigilant eyes, are round us; and it is not often that I can baffle them, as I have done now. Fairest, hear me!" and this time he succeeded in seizing the hand, which vainly struggled against his clasp. "Nay, why so coy? what can female heart desire, that my love cannot shower upon thine? Speak but the word, enchanting maiden, and I will bear thee from these scenes, unseemly to thy gentle eyes. Amidst the pavilions of princes shalt thou repose; and, amidst gardens of the orange and the rose, shalt thou listen to the vows of thine adorer. Surely, in these arms thou wilt not pine for a barbarous home, and a fated city. And if thy pride, sweet maiden, deafen thee to the voice of nature, learn that the haughtiest dames of Spain would bend, in envious court, to the beloved of their future king. This night — listen to me — I say, listen — this night I will bear thee hence! Be but mine, and no matter, whether heretic or infidel, or whatever the priests style thee, neither church nor king shall tear thee from the bosom of thy lover."

"It is well spoken, son of the Most Christian Monarch!" said a deep voice; and the Dominican, Tomas de Torquemada, stood before the prince.

Juan, as if struck by a thunderbolt, released his hold, and, staggering back a few paces, seemed to cower, abashed and humbled, before the eye of the

priest, as it glared upon him through the gathering darkness.

"Prince," said the friar, after a pause, "not to thee will our holy church attribute this crime; thy pious heart hath been betrayed by sorcery. Retire."

"Father," said the prince, — in a tone into which, despite his awe of that terrible man, THE FIRST GRAND INQUISITOR OF SPAIN, his libertine spirit involuntarily forced itself, in a half-latent raillery, — "sorcery of eyes like those bewitched the wise son of a more pious sire than even Ferdinand of Arragon."

"He blasphemes!" muttered the monk. "Prince, beware! you know not what you do."

The prince lingered; and then, as if aware that he must yield, gathered his cloak round him, and left the tent, without reply.

Pale and trembling, — with fears no less felt, perhaps, though more vague and perplexed, than those from which she had just been delivered, — Leila stood before the monk.

"Be seated, daughter of the faithless," said Torquemada, "we would converse with thee: and, as thou valuest — I say not thy soul, for, alas! of that precious treasure thou art not conscious — but, mark me, woman! as thou prizest the safety of those delicate limbs, and that wanton beauty, answer truly what I shall ask thee. The man who brought thee hither — is he, in truth, thy father?"

"Alas!" answered Leila, almost fainting with terror at this rude and menacing address, "he is, in truth, mine only parent."

"And his faith — his religion?"

"I have never beheld him pray."

"Hem! he never prays — a noticeable fact. But of what sect, what creed, does he profess himself?"

"I cannot answer thee."

"Nay, there he means that may wring from thee an answer. Maiden, be not so stubborn; speak! thinkest thou he serves the temple of the Mahometan?"

"No! oh, no!" answered poor Leila, eagerly, deeming that her reply, in this, at least, would be acceptable. "He disowns, he scorns, he abhors, the Moorish faith — even (she added) with too fierce a zeal."

"Thou dost not share that zeal, then? Well, worships he in secret after the Christian rites?"

Leila hung her head, and answered not.

"I understand thy silence. And in what belief, maiden, wert thou reared beneath his roof?"

"I know not what it is called among men," answered Leila, with firmness, "but it is the faith of the ONE GOD, who protects his chosen, and shall avenge their wrongs — the God who made earth and heaven; and who, in an idolatrous and benighted world, transmitted the knowledge of Himself and his holy laws, from age to age, through the channel of one solitary people, in the plains of Palestine, and by the waters of the Hebron."

"And in that faith thou wert trained, maiden, by thy father?" said the Dominican, calmly. "I am satisfied. Rest here, in peace: we may meet again, soon."

The last words were spoken with a soft and tranquil smile — a smile in which glazing eyes and agonising hearts had often beheld the ghastly omen of the torture and the stake.

On quitting the unfortunate Leila, the monk took his way towards the neighbouring tent of Ferdinand. But, ere he reached it, a new thought seemed to strike the holy man; he altered the direction of his steps, and gained one of those little shrines common in catholic countries, and which had been hastily built of wood, in the centre of a small copse, and by the side of a brawling rivulet, towards the back of the king's pavilion. But one solitary sentry, at the entrance of the copse, guarded the consecrated place; and its exceeding loneliness and quiet were a grateful contrast to the animated world of the surrounding camp. The monk entered the shrine, and fell down on his knees before an image of the Virgin, rudely sculptured, indeed, but richly decorated.

"Ah, Holy Mother!" groaned this singular man, "support me in the trial to which I am appointed. Thou knowest that the glory of thy blessed Son is the sole object for which I live, and move, and have my being; but at times, alas! the spirit is infected with the weakness of the flesh. *Ora pro nobis*, O Mother of mercy! Verily, oftentimes my heart sinks within me when it is mine to vindicate the honour of thy holy cause against the young and the tender, the aged and the decrepit. But what are beauty and youth, gray hairs and trembling knees, in the eye of the Creator? Miserable worms are we all; nor is there any thing acceptable in the Divine sight, but the hearts of the faithful. Youth without faith, age without belief, purity without grace, virtue without holiness, are only more hideous by their seeming beauty — whited sepulchres, glittering rottenness. I know this—I know it; but the human man is strong within me. Strengthen me, that

I pluck it out; so that, by diligent and constant struggle with the feeble Adam, thy servant may be reduced into a mere machine, to punish the godless and advance the church."

Here sobs and tears choked the speech of the Dominican; he grovelled in the dust, he tore his hair, he howled aloud: the agony was fierce upon him. At length, he drew from his robe a whip, composed of several thongs, studded with small and sharp nails; and, stripping his gown, and the shirt of hair worn underneath, over his shoulders, applied the scourge to the naked flesh, with a fury which soon covered the green sward with the thick and clotted blood. The exhaustion which followed this terrible penance seemed to restore the senses of the stern fanatic. A smile broke over the features, that bodily pain only released from the anguished expression of mental and visionary struggles; and, when he rose, and drew the hair-cloth shirt over the lacerated and quivering flesh, he said, — "Now hast thou deigned to comfort and visit me, O pitying Mother; and, even as by these austerities against this miserable body, is the spirit relieved and soothed, so dost thou typify and betoken, that men's bodies are not to be spared by those who seek to save souls, and bring the nations of the earth into thy fold."

With that thought, the countenance of Torquemada reassumed its wonted rigid and passionless composure; and, replacing the scourge, yet clotted with blood, into his bosom, he pursued his way to the royal tent.

He found Ferdinand poring over the accounts of the vast expenses of his military preparations, which he had just received from his treasurer; and the brow of

the thrifty, though ostentatious monarch, was greatly overcast by the examination.

"By the Bulls of Guisando!" said the king, gravely, "I purchase the salvation of my army, in this holy war, at a marvellous heavy price; and, if the infidels hold out much longer, we shall have to pawn our very patrimony of Arragon."

"Son," answered the Dominican, "to purposes like thine, fear not that Providence itself will supply the worldly means. But why doubtest thou? are not the means within thy reach? It is just that thou alone shouldst not support the wars by which Christendom is glorified. Are there not others?"

"I know what thou wouldst say, father," interrupted the king, quickly, — "thou wouldst observe that my brother monarchs should assist me with arms and treasure. Most just. But they are avaricious and envious, Tomas; and Mammon hath corrupted them."

"Nay, not to kings pointed my thought."

"Well, then," resumed the king, impatiently, "thou wouldst imply that mine own knights and nobles should yield up their coffers, and mortgage their possessions. And so they ought; but they murmur, already, at what they have yielded to our necessities."

"And, in truth," rejoined the friar, "these noble warriors should not be shorn of a splendour that well becomes the valiant champions of the church. Nay, listen to me, son, and I may suggest a means whereby, not the friends, but enemies, of the Catholic faith shall contribute to the downfall of the Paynim. In thy dominions, especially those newly won, throughout Andalusia, in the kingdom of Cordova, are men of enormous wealth; the very caverns of the earth are

sown with the impious treasure they have plundered from Christian hands, and consume in the furtherance of their iniquity. Sire, I speak of the race that crucified the Lord."

"The Jews — ay, but the excuse — "

"Is before thee. This traitor, with whom thou holdest intercourse, who vowed to thee to render up Granada, and who was found, the very next morning, fighting with the Moors, with the blood of a Spanish martyr red upon his hands, did he not confess that his fathers were of that hateful race? did he not bargain with thee to elevate his brethren to the rank of Christians? and has he not left with thee, upon false pretences, a harlot of his faith, who, by sorcery and the help of the evil one, hath seduced into frantic passion the heart of the heir of the most Christian king?"

"Ha! thus does that libertine boy ever scandalise us!" said the king, bitterly.

"Well," pursued the Dominican, not heeding the interruption, "have you not here excuse enough to wring from the whole race the purchase of their existence? Note the glaring proof of this conspiracy of hell. The outcasts of the earth employed this crafty agent to contract with thee for power; and, to consummate their guilty designs, the arts that seduced Solomon are employed against thy son. The beauty of the strange woman captivates his senses: so that, through the future sovereign of Spain, the counsels of Jewish craft may establish the domination of Jewish ambition. How knowest thou (he added, as he observed that Ferdinand listened to him with earnest attention) — how knowest thou but what the next step might have been thy secret assassination, so that the victim of witchcraft, the minion

of the Jewess, might reign in the stead of the mighty and unconquerable Ferdinand?"

"Go on, father," said the king, thoughtfully; "I see, at least, enough to justify an impost upon these servitors of Mammon."

"But, though common sense suggests to us," continued Torquemada, "that this disguised Israelite could not have acted on so vast a design without the instigation of his brethren, not only in Granada, but throughout all Andalusia, — would it not be right to obtain from him his confession, and that of the maiden, within the camp, so that we may have broad and undeniable evidence, whereon to act, and to still all cavil, that may come not only from the godless, but even from the too tender scruples of the righteous? Even the queen — whom the saints ever guard! — hath ever too soft a heart for these infidels; and ——"

"Right!" cried the king, again breaking upon Torquemada; "Isabel, the queen of Castile, must be satisfied of the justice of all our actions."

"And, should it be proved that thy throne or life were endangered, and that magic was exercised to entrap her royal son into a passion for a Jewish maiden, which the church holds a crime worthy of excommunication itself, — surely, instead of counteracting, she would assist our schemes."

"Holy friend," said Ferdinand, with energy, "ever a comforter, both for this world and the next, to thee, and to the new powers intrusted to thee, we commit this charge; see to it at once; time presses — Granada is obstinate — the treasury waxes low."

"Son, thou hast said enough," replied the Dominican, closing his eyes, and muttering a short thanksgiving. "Now, then, to my task."

"Yet stay," said the king, with an altered visage; "follow me to my oratory within: my heart is heavy, and I would fain seek the solace of the confessional."

The monk obeyed: and, while Ferdinand, whose wonderful abilities were mingled with the weakest superstition, — who persecuted from policy, yet believed, in his own heart, that he punished but from piety, — confessed, with penitent tears, the grave offences of awes forgotten, and beads untold; and while the Dominican admonished, rebuked, or soothed, — neither prince nor monk ever dreamt that there was an error to confess, in, or a penance to be adjudged to, the cruelty that tortured a fellow-being, or the avarice that sought pretences for the extortion of a whole people. And yet we are told, by some philosophers, that his conscience is a sufficient guide to man!



CHAPTER VII.

The tribunal and the miracle.

It was the dead of night — the army was hushed in sleep — when four soldiers, belonging to the holy brotherhood, bearing with them one whose manacles proclaimed him a prisoner, passed in steady silence to a huge tent in the neighbourhood of the royal pavilion. A deep dyke, formidable barricadoes, and sentries stationed at frequent intervals, testified the estimation in which the safety of this segment of the camp was held. The tent to which the soldiers approached was, in extent, larger than even the king's pavilion itself — a mansion of canvass, surrounded by a wide wall of massive stones; and from its summit gloomed, in the clear and shining starlight, a small black pennant, on which was wrought a white broad-pointed cross. The soldiers halted at the gate in the wall, resigned their charge, with a whispered watchword, to two gaunt sentries; and then (relieving the sentries who proceeded on with the prisoner) remained, mute and motionless, at the post: for stern silence and Spartan discipline were the attributes of the brotherhood of St. Hermandad.

The prisoner, as he now neared the tent, halted a moment, looked round steadily, as if to fix the spot in his remembrance, and then, with an impatient though stately gesture, followed his guards. He passed two divisions

of the tent, dimly lighted, and apparently deserted. A man, clad in long black robes, with a white cross on his breast, now appeared; there was an interchange of signals in dumb-show — and in another moment Almamen, the Hebrew, stood within a large chamber (if so that division of the tent might be called) hung with black serge. At the upper part of the space was an *estrado*, or platform, on which, by a long table, sate three men; while, at the head of the board, was seen the calm and rigid countenance of Tomas de Torquemada. The threshold of the tent was guarded by two men, in garments similar in hue and fashion to those of the figure who had ushered Almamen into the presence of the inquisitor, each bearing a long lance, and with a long two-edged sword by his side. This made all the inhabitants of that melancholy and ominous apartment.

The Israelite looked round with a pale brow, but a flashing and scornful eye; and, when he met the gaze of the Dominican, it almost seemed as if those two men, each so raised above his fellows by the sternness of his nature, and the energy of his passions, sought by a look alone to assert his own supremacy and crush his foe, Yet, in truth, neither did justice to the other; and the indignant disdain of Almamen was retorted by the cold and icy contempt of the Dominican.

“Prisoner,” said Torquemada (the first to withdraw his gaze), “a less haughty and stubborn demeanour might have better suited thy condition: but no matter; our church is meek and humble. We have sent for thee in a charitable and paternal hope; for although, as spy and traitor, thy life is already forfeited, yet would we fain redeem and spare it to repentance. That hope mayst

thou not forego, for the nature of all of us is weak and clings to life — that straw of the drowning seaman.”

“Priest, if such thou art,” replied the Hebrew, “I have already, when first brought to this camp, explained the causes of my detention amongst the troops of the Moor. It was my zeal for the King of Spain that brought me into that peril. Escaping from that peril, incurred in his behalf, is the King of Spain to be my accuser and my judge? If, however, my life now is sought, as the grateful return for the proffer of inestimable service, I stand here to yield it. Do thy worst; and tell thy master, that he loses more by my death than he can win by the lives of thirty thousand warriors.

“Cease this idle babble,” said the monk-inquisitor, contemptuously, “nor think thou couldst ever deceive, with thy empty words, the mighty intellect of Ferdinand of Spain. Thou hast now to defend thyself against still graver charges than those of treachery to the king whom thou didst profess to serve. Yea, misbeliever as thou art, it is thine to vindicate thyself from blasphemy against the God thou shouldst adore. Confess the truth: thou art of the tribe and faith of Israel?”

The Hebrew frowned darkly. “Man,” said he, solemnly, “is a judge of the deeds of men, but not of their opinions. I will not answer thee.”

“Pause! We have means at hand that the strongest nerves and the stoutest heart have failed to encounter. Pause — confess!”

“Thy threat awes me not,” said the Hebrew: “but I am human; and since thou wouldst know the truth, thou mayst learn it without the torture. I am of the same race as the apostles of thy church — I am a Jew.”

"He confesses — write down the words. Prisoner, thou hast done wisely; and we pray the Lord that, acting thus, thou mayst escape both the torture and the death. And in that faith thy daughter was reared? Answer."

"My daughter! there is no charge against her! By the God of Sinai and Horeb, you dare not touch a hair of that innocent head!"

"Answer," repeated the inquisitor, coldly.

"I do answer. She was brought up no renegade to her father's faith."

"Write down the confession. Prisoner," resumed the Dominican, after a pause, "but few more questions remain; answer them truly, and thy life is saved. In thy conspiracy to raise thy brotherhood of Andalusia to power and influence — or, as thou didst craftily term it, to equal laws with the followers of our blessed Lord; in thy conspiracy (by what dark arts I seek not now to know — *protege nos, beate Domine!*) to entangle in wanton affections to thy daughter the heart of the Infant of Spain — silence, I say — be still! in this conspiracy, thou wert aided, abetted, or instigated by certain Jews of Andalusia —"

"Hold, priest!" cried Almamen, impetuously, "thou didst name my child. Do I hear aright? Placed under the sacred charge of a king and a belted knight, has she — oh! answer me, I implore thee — been insulted by the licentious addresses of one of that king's own lineage? Answer! I am a Jew — but I am a father, and a man."

"This pretended passion deceives us not," said the Dominican (who, himself cut off from the ties of life, knew nothing of their power). "Reply to the question put to thee: name thy accomplices."

"I have told thee all. Thou hast refused to answer *me*. I scorn and defy thee: my lips are closed."

The grand inquisitor glanced to his brethren, and raised his hand. His assistants whispered each other; one of them rose, and disappeared behind the canvass at the back of the tent. Presently the hangings were withdrawn; and the prisoner beheld an interior chamber, hung with various instruments, the nature of which was betrayed by their very shape; while, by the rack, placed in the centre of that dreary chamber, stood a tall and grisly figure, his arms bare, his eyes bent, as by an instinct, on the prisoner.

Almamen gazed at these dread preparations with an unflinching aspect. The guards at the entrance of the tent approached: they struck off the fetters from his feet and hands; they led him towards the appointed place of torture.

Suddenly the Israelite paused.

"Priest," said he, in a more humble accent than he had yet assumed, "the tidings that thou didst communicate to me, respecting the sole daughter of my house and love, bewildered and confused me for the moment. Suffer me but for a single moment to recollect my senses, and I will answer without compulsion all thou mayst ask. Permit thy questions to be repeated."

The Dominican, whose cruelty to others seemed to himself sanctioned by his own insensibility to fear, and contempt for bodily pain, smiled with bitter scorn at the apparent vacillation and weakness of the prisoner: but, as he delighted not in torture, merely for torture's sake, he motioned to the guards to release the Israelite; and

replied, in a voice unnaturally mild and kindly, considering the circumstances of the scene, —

“Prisoner, could we save thee from pain, even by the anguish of our own flesh and sinews, Heaven is our judge that we would willingly undergo the torture which, with grief and sorrow, we ordained to thee. Pause — take breath — collect thyself. Three minutes shalt thou have to consider what course to adopt ere we repeat the question. But then beware how thou triflest with our indulgence.”

“It suffices — I thank thee,” said the Hebrew, with a touch of gratitude in his voice. As he spoke, he bent his face within his bosom, which he covered, as in profound meditation, with the folds of his long robe. Scarce half the brief time allowed him had expired, when he again lifted his countenance, and, as he did so, flung back his garment. The Dominican uttered a loud cry; the guards started back in awe. A wonderful change had come over the intended victim: he seemed to stand amongst them literally wrapt in fire; flames burst from his lip, and played with his long locks, as, catching the glowing hue, they curled over his shoulders, like serpents of burning light: blood-red were his breast and limbs, his haughty crest, and his outstretched arm; and as, for a single moment, he met the shuddering eyes of his judges, he seemed, indeed, to verify all the superstitions of the time — no longer the trembling captive, but the mighty demon, or the terrible magician.

The Dominican was the first to recover his self-possession. “Seize the enchanter!” he exclaimed, but no man stirred. Ere yet the exclamation had died on his lip, Almamen took from his breast a vial, and dashed it on the ground — it broke into a thousand shivers: a mist

rose over the apartment — it spread, thickened, darkened, as a sudden night: the lamps could not pierce it. The luminous form of the Hebrew grew dull and dim, until it vanished in the shade. On every eye blindness seemed to fall. There was a dead silence, broken by a cry and groan; and when, after some minutes, the darkness gradually dispersed, Almamen was gone. One of the guards lay bathed in blood upon the ground; they raised him: he had attempted to seize the prisoner, and been stricken with a mortal wound. He died as he faltered forth the explanation. In the confusion and dismay of the scene, none noticed, till long afterwards, that the prisoner had paused long enough to strip the dying guard of his long mantle; a proof that he feared his more secret arts might not suffice to bear him safe through the camp, without the aid of worldly stratagem.

“The fiend hath been amongst us!” said the Dominican, solemnly, falling on his knees, — “let us pray!”

CHAPTER I

B O O K III.

CHAPTER I.

Isabel and the jewish maiden.

WHILE this scene took place before the tribunal of Torquemada, Leila had been summoned from the indulgence of fears, which her gentle nature and her luxurious nurturing had ill fitted her to contend against, to the presence of the queen. That gifted and high-spirited princess, whose virtues were her own, whose faults were of her age, was not, it is true, without the superstition and something of the intolerant spirit of her royal spouse: but, even where her faith assented to persecution, her heart ever inclined to mercy; and it was her voice alone that ever counteracted the fiery zeal of Torquemada, and mitigated the sufferings of the unhappy ones who fell under the suspicion of heresy. She had, happily, too, within her a strong sense of justice, as well as the sentiment of compassion; and often, when she could not save the accused, she prevented the consequences of his imputed crime falling upon the innocent members of his house or tribe.

In the interval between his conversation with Ferdinand and the examination of Almamen, the Dominican had sought the queen; and had placed before her, in glowing colours, not only the treason of Almamen, but the consequences of the impious passion her son had conceived for Leila. In that day, any connexion between a Christian knight and a Jewess was deemed

a sin, scarce expiable; and Isabel conceived all that horror of her son's offence, which was natural in a pious mother and a haughty queen. But, despite all the arguments of the friar, she could not be prevailed upon to render up Leila to the tribunal of the Inquisition; and that dread court, but newly established, did not dare, without her consent, to seize upon one under the immediate protection of the queen.

"Fear not, father," said Isabel, with quiet firmness, — "I will take upon myself to examine the maiden; and, at least, I will see her removed from all chance of tempting or being tempted by this graceless boy. But she was placed under charge of the king and myself as a hostage and a trust; we accepted the charge, and our royal honour is pledged to the safety of the maiden. Heaven forbid that I should deny the existence of sorcery, assured as we are of its emanation from the evil one; but I fear, in this fancy of Juan's, that the maiden is more sinned against than sinning: and yet my son is, doubtless, not aware of the unhappy faith of the Jewess; the knowledge of which alone will suffice to cure him of his error. You shake your head, father; but, I repeat, I will act in this affair so as to merit the confidence I demand. Go, good Tomas. We have not reigned so long, without belief in our power to control and deal with a simple maiden."

The queen extended her hand to the monk, with a smile, so sweet in its dignity, that it softened even that rugged heart; and, with a reluctant sigh, and a murmured prayer that her counsels might be guided for the best, Torquemada left the royal presence.

"The poor child!" thought Isabel, — "those tender limbs, and that fragile form, are ill fitted for yon monk's

stern tutelage. She seems gentle; and her face has in it all the yielding softness of our sex: doubtless, by mild means, she may be persuaded to abjure her wretched creed; and the shade of some holy convent may hide her alike from the licentious gaze of my son, and the iron zeal of the inquisitor. I will see her."

When Leila entered the queen's pavilion, Isabel, who was alone, marked her trembling step with a compassionate eye; and, as Leila, in obedience to the queen's request, threw up her veil, the paleness of her cheek, and the traces of recent tears, pled to Isabel's heart with more success than had attended all the pious invectives of Torquemada.

"Maiden," said Isabel, encouragingly, "I fear thou hast been strangely harassed by the thoughtless caprice of the young prince. Think of it no more. But, if thou art what I have ventured to believe, and to assert thee to be, cheerfully subscribe to the means I will suggest for preventing the continuance of addresses which cannot but injure thy fair name."

"Ah, madam!" said Leila, as she fell on one knee beside the queen, "most joyfully, most gratefully, will I accept any asylum which proffers solitude and peace."

"The asylum to which I would fain lead thy steps," answered Isabel, gently, "is indeed one whose solitude is holy — whose peace is that of heaven. But of this hereafter. Thou wilt not hesitate, then, to quit the camp, unknown to the prince, and ere he can again seek thee?"

"Hesitate, madam? Ah, rather! how shall I express my thanks?"

"I did not read that face misjudgingly," thought the queen, as she resumed. "Be it so; we will not lose another night. Withdraw yonder, through the inner tent: the litter shall be straight prepared for thee; and ere midnight thou shalt sleep in safety under the roof of one of the bravest knights and noblest ladies that our realm can boast. Thou shalt bear with thee, maiden, a letter that shall commend thee specially to the care of thy hostess — thou wilt find her of a kindly and fostering nature. And, oh, maiden!" added the queen, with benevolent warmth, "steel not thy heart against her — listen with ductile senses to her gentle ministry; and may God and his Son prosper that pious lady's counsel, so that it may win a new strayling to the Immortal Fold!"

Leila listened and wondered, but made no answer; until, as she gained the entrance to the interior division of the tent, she stopped abruptly, and said, —

"Pardon me, gracious queen, but dare I ask thee one question — it is not of myself?"

"Speak, and fear not."

"My father — hath aught been heard of him? He promised, that ere the fifth day were past, he would once more see his child; and, alas! that date is past, and I am still alone in the dwelling of the stranger."

"Unhappy child!" muttered Isabel to herself, "thou knowest not his treason nor his fate — yet why shouldst thou? ignorant of what would render thee blest hereafter, continue ignorant of what would afflict thee here. Be cheered, maiden," answered the queen, aloud. "No doubt there are reasons sufficient to forbid your meeting. But thou shalt not lack friends in the dwelling-house of the stranger."

“Ah! noble queen, pardon me, and one word more. There hath been with me, more than once, a stern old man, whose voice freezes the blood within my veins; he questions me of my father, and in the tone of a foe who would entrap from the child something to the peril of the sire. That man — thou knowest him, gracious queen — he cannot have the power to harm my father?”

“Peace, maiden! the man thou speakest of is the priest of God, and the innocent have nothing to dread from his reverend zeal. For thyself, I say again, be cheered; in the home to which I consign thee, thou wilt see him no more. Take comfort, poor child — weep not: all have their cares; our duty is to bear in this life, reserving hope only for the next.”

The queen, destined herself to those domestic afflictions which pomp cannot soothe, nor power allay, spoke with a prophetic sadness which yet more touched a heart that her kindness of look and tone had already softened; and, in the impulse of a nature never tutored in the rigid ceremonials of that stately court, Leila suddenly came forward, and, falling on one knee, seized the hand of her protectress, and kissed it warmly through her tears.

“Are you, too, unhappy?” she said, — “I will pray for you to *my* God!”

The queen, surprised and moved at an action, which, had witnesses been present, would only, perhaps (for such is human nature), have offended her Castilian prejudices, left her hand in Leila’s grateful clasp; and, laying the other upon the parted and luxuriant ringlets of the kneeling maiden, said, gently, — “And thy prayers shall avail thee and me when thy God and mine are the same. Bless thee, maiden! I am a mother, thou art motherless — bless thee!”

CHAPTER. II.

The temptation of the jewess, — in which the history passes from the outward to the internal.

It was about the very hour, almost the very moment, in which Almamen effected his mysterious escape from the tent of the Inquisition, that the train accompanying the litter which bore Leila, and which was composed of some chosen soldiers of Isabel's own body-guard, after traversing the camp, winding along that part of the mountainous defile which was in the possession of the Spaniards, and ascending a high and steep acclivity, halted before the gates of a strongly fortified castle renowned in the chronicles of that memorable war. The hoarse challenge of the sentry, the grating of jealous bars, the clank of hoofs upon the rough pavement of the courts, and the streaming glare of torches — falling upon stern and bearded visages, and imparting a ruddier glow to the moonlit buttresses and battlements of the fortress — aroused Leila from a kind of torpor, rather than sleep, in which the fatigue and excitement of the day had steeped her senses. An old seneschal conducted her, through vast and gloomy halls, (how unlike the brilliant chambers and fantastic arcades of her Moorish home!) to a huge Gothic apartment, hung with the arras of Flemish looms. In a few moments, maidens, hastily aroused from slumber, grouped around her with a respect

which would certainly not have been accorded had her birth and creed been known. They gazed with surprise at her extraordinary beauty and foreign garb, and evidently considered the new guest a welcome addition to the scanty society of the castle. Under any other circumstances, the strangeness of all she saw, and the frowning gloom of the chamber to which she was consigned, would have damped the spirits of one whose destiny had so suddenly passed from the deepest quiet into the sternest excitement. But any change was a relief to the roar of the camp, the addresses of the prince, and the ominous voice and countenance of Torquemada; and Leila looked around her, with the feeling that the queen's promise was fulfilled, and that she was already amidst the blessings of shelter and repose. It was long, however, before sleep revisited her eyelids, and when she woke the noonday sun streamed broadly through the lattice. By the bedside sate a matron advanced in years, but of a mild and prepossessing countenance, which only borrowed a yet more attractive charm from an expression of placid and habitual melancholy. She was robed in black; but the rich pearls that were interwoven in the sleeves and stomacher, the jewelled cross that was appended from a chain of massive gold, and, still more, a certain air of dignity and command, — bespoke, even to the inexperienced eye of Leila, the evidence of superior station.

“Thou hast slept late, daughter,” said the lady, with a benevolent smile; “may thy slumbers have refreshed thee! Accept my regrets that I knew not till this morning of thine arrival, or I should have been the first to welcome the charge of my royal mistress.”

There was in the look, much more than in the words, of the Donna Inez de Quexada, a soothing and tender interest that was as balm to the heart of Leila; in truth, she had been made the guest of, perhaps, the only lady in Spain, of pure and Christian blood, who did not despise or execrate the name of Leila's tribe. Donna Inez had herself contracted to a Jew a debt of gratitude which she had sought to return to the whole race. Many years before the time in which our tale is cast, her husband and herself had been sojourning at Naples, then closely connected with the politics of Spain, upon an important state mission. They had then an only son, a youth of a wild and desultory character, whom the spirit of adventure allured to the East. In one of those sultry lands the young Quexada was saved from the hands of robbers by the caravanserai of a wealthy traveller. With this stranger he contracted that intimacy which wandering and romantic men often conceive for each other, without any other sympathy than that of the same pursuits. Subsequently, he discovered that his companion was of the Jewish faith; and, with the usual prejudice of his birth and time, recoiled from the friendship he had solicited, and shrunk from the sense of the obligation he had incurred: he quitted his companion. Wearied, at length, with travel, he was journeying homeward, when he was seized with a sudden and virulent fever, mistaken for plague: all fled from the contagion of the supposed pestilence — he was left to die. One man discovered his condition — watched, tended, and, skilled in the deeper secrets of the healing art, restored him to life and health: it was the same Jew who had preserved him from the robbers. At this second and more

inestimable obligation, the prejudices of the Spaniard vanished: he formed a deep and grateful attachment for his preserver; they lived together for some time, and the Israelite finally accompanied the young Quexada to Naples. Inez retained a lively sense of the service rendered to her only son; and the impression had been increased, not only by the appearance of the Israelite, which, dignified and stately, bore no likeness to the cringing servility of his brethren, but also by the singular beauty and gentle deportment of his then newly wed bride, whom he had wooed and won in that holy land, sacred equally to the faith of Christian and of Jew. The young Quexada did not long survive his return; his constitution was broken by long travel, and the debility that followed his fierce disease. On his death-bed he had besought the mother whom he left childless, and whose Catholic prejudices were less stubborn than those of his sire, never to forget the services a Jew had conferred upon him; to make the sole recompense in her power — the sole recompense the Jew himself had demanded — and to lose no occasion to soothe or mitigate the miseries to which the bigotry of the time often exposed the oppressed race of his deliverer. Donna Inez had faithfully kept the promise she gave to the last scion of her house; and, through the power and reputation of her husband and her own connexions, and still more through an early friendship with the queen, she had, on her return to Spain, been enabled to ward off many a persecution, and many a charge on false pretences, to which the wealth of some son of Israel made the cause, while his faith made the pretext. Yet, with all the natural feelings of a rigid Catholic, she had earnestly sought to render the favour

she had thus obtained amongst the Jews minister to her pious zeal for their more than temporal welfare. She had endeavoured, by gentle means, to make the conversions which force was impotent to effect; and, in some instances, her success had been signal. The good señora had thus obtained high renown for sanctity; and Isabel thought rightly, that she could not select a protectress for Leila, who would more kindly shelter her youth, or more strenuously labour for her salvation. It was indeed a dangerous situation for the adherence of the maiden to that faith which it had cost her fiery father so many sacrifices to preserve and to advance.

It was by little and little that Donna Inez sought, rather to undermine, than to storm the mental fortress, she hoped to man with spiritual allies; and, in her frequent conversations with Leila, she was at once perplexed and astonished by the simple and sublime nature of the belief upon which she waged war. For, whether it was that, in his desire to preserve Leila as much as possible from contact even with Jews themselves, whose general character (vitiated by the oppression which engendered meanness, and the extortion which fostered avarice) Almamen regarded with lofty though concealed repugnance; or whether it was, that his philosophy did not interpret the Jewish formula of belief in the same spirit as the herd, — the religion inculcated in the breast of Leila was different from that which Inez had ever before encountered amongst her proselytes. It was less mundane and material — a kind of passionate rather than metaphysical deism, which invested the great ONE, indeed, with many human sympathies and attributes, but still left him the august and awful

God of the Genesis, the Father of a Universe, though the individual Protector of a petty and fallen sect. Her attention had been less directed to whatever appears, to a superficial gaze, stern and inexorable in the character of the Hebrew God, and which the religion of Christ so beautifully softened and so majestically refined, than to those passages in which His love watched over a chosen people, and His forbearance bore with their transgressions. Her reason had been worked upon to its belief by that mysterious and solemn agency, by which, — when the whole world beside was bowed to the worship of innumerable deities, and the adoration of graven images, — in a small and secluded portion of earth, amongst a people far less civilised and philosophical than many by which they were surrounded, had been alone preserved a pure and sublime theism, disdaining a likeness in the things of heaven or earth. Leila knew little of the more narrow and exclusive tenets of her brethren: a Jewess in name, she was rather a deist in belief; a deist of such a creed as Athenian schools might have taught to the imaginative pupils of Plato, save only that too dark a shadow had been cast over the hopes of another world. Without the absolute denial of the Sadducee, Almamen had, probably, much of the quiet scepticism which belonged to many sects of the early Jews, and which still clings round the wisdom of the wisest who reject the doctrine of Revelation; and, while he had not sought to eradicate from the breast of his daughter any of the vague desire which points to a Hereafter, he had never, at least, directed her thoughts or aspirations to that solemn future. Nor in the sacred book which was given to her survey, and which so rigidly upheld

the unity of the Supreme Power, was there that positive and unequivocal assurance of life beyond "the grave, where all things are forgotten," that might supply the deficiencies of her mortal instructor. Perhaps, sharing those notions of the different value of the sexes, prevalent, from the remotest period, in his beloved and ancestral East, Almamen might have hopes for himself which did not extend to his child. And thus she grew up, with all the beautiful faculties of the soul cherished and unfolded, without thought, without more than dim and shadowy conjectures, of the Eternal Bourne to which the sorrowing pilgrim of the earth is bound. It was on this point that the quick eye of Donna Inez discovered her faith was vulnerable: who would not, if belief were voluntary, believe in the world to come? Leila's curiosity and interest were aroused; she willingly listened to her new guide — she willingly inclined to conclusions pressed upon her, not with menace, but persuasion. Free from the stubborn associations, the sectarian prejudices, and unversed in the peculiar traditions and accounts, of the learned of her race, she found nothing to shock her in the volume which seemed but a continuation of the elder writings of her faith. The sufferings of the Messiah, his sublime purity, his meek forgiveness, spoke to her woman's heart; his doctrines elevated, while they charmed, her reason: and in the heaven that a Divine hand opened to all, — the humble as the proud, the oppressed as the oppressor, to the woman as to the lords of the earth, — she found a haven for all the doubts she had known, and for the despair which of late had darkened the face of earth. Her home lost, the deep and beautiful love of her youth blighted, — that was a creed almost irre-

sistible which told her that grief was but for a day, that happiness was eternal. Far, too, from revolting such of the Hebrew pride of association as she had formed, the birth of the Messiah in the land of the Israelites seemed to consummate their peculiar triumph as the Elected of Jehovah. And while she mourned for the Jews who persecuted the Saviour, she gloried in those whose belief had carried the name and worship of the descendants of David over the furthest regions of the world. Often she perplexed and startled the worthy Inez, by exclaiming, "This, your belief, is the same as mine, adding only the assurance of immortal life — Christianity is but the Revelation of Judaism."

The wise and gentle instrument of Leila's conversion did not, however, give vent to those more Catholic sentiments which might have scared away the wings of the descending dove. She forebore too vehemently to point out the distinctions of the several creeds, and rather suffered them to melt insensibly one into the other: Leila was a Christian, while she still believed herself a Jewess. But in the fond and lovely weakness of mortal emotions, there was one bitter thought that often and often came to mar the peace that otherwise would have settled on her soul. That father, the sole softener of whose stern heart and mysterious fate she was, — with wath pangs would he receive the news of her conversion! And Muza, that bright and hero-vision of her youth — was she not setting the last seal of separation upon all hope of union with the idol of the Moors? But, alas! was she not already separated from him, and had not their faiths been from the first at variance? From these thoughts she started with sighs and tears; and before

her stood the crucifix already admitted into her chamber, and — not, perhaps, too wisely — banished so rigidly from the oratories of the Huguenot. For the representation of that divine resignation, that mortal agony, that miraculous sacrifice, — what eloquence it hath for our sorrows! what preaching hath the symbol to the vanities of our wishes, to the yearnings of our discontent!

By degrees, as her new faith grew confirmed, Leila now inclined herself earnestly to those pictures of the sanctity and calm of the conventual life which Inez delighted to draw. In the reaction of her thoughts, and her despondency of all worldly happiness, there seemed, to the young maiden, an inexpressible charm in a solitude which was to release her, for ever, from human love, and render her entirely up to sacred visions and imperishable hopes. And with this selfish, there mingled a more generous and sublime, sentiment. The prayers of a convert might be heard in favour of those yet benighted; and the awful curse upon her outcast race be lightened by the orisons of one humble heart. In all ages, in all creeds, a strange and mystic impression has existed of the efficacy of self-sacrifice in working the redemption, even of a whole people: this belief, so strong in the old orient and classic religions, was yet more confirmed by Christianity, — a creed founded upon the grandest of historic sacrifices; and the lofty doctrine of which, rightly understood, perpetuates in the heart of every believer the duty of self-immolation, as well as faith in the power of prayer, no matter how great the object, how mean the suppliant. On these thoughts Leila meditated, till thoughts acquired the intensity of passions, and the conversion of the Jewess was completed.

CHAPTER III.

The hour and the man.

It was on the third morning after the King of Granada, reconciled to his people, had reviewed his gallant army in the Vivarrambla; and Boabdil, surrounded by his chiefs and nobles, was planning a deliberate and decisive battle, by assault on the Christian camp, — when a scout suddenly arrived, breathless, at the gates of the palace, to communicate the unlooked-for and welcome intelligence, that Ferdinand had in the night broken up his camp, and marched across the mountains towards Cordova. In fact, the outbreak of formidable conspiracies had suddenly rendered the appearance of Ferdinand necessary elsewhere; and, his intrigues with Almamen frustrated, he despaired of a very speedy conquest of the city. The Spanish king resolved, therefore, after completing the devastation of the Vega, to defer the formal and prolonged siege, which could alone place Granada within his power, until his attention was no longer distracted to other foes, and until, it must be added, he had replenished an exhausted treasury. He had formed, with Torquemada, a vast and wide scheme of persecution, not only against Jews, but against Christians whose fathers had been of that race, and who were suspected of relapsing into Judaical practices. The two schemers

of this grand design were actuated by different motives: the one wished to exterminate the crime; the other, to tell forgiveness for it. And Torquemada connived at the griping avarice of the king, because it served to give to himself, and to the infant Inquisition, a power and authority which the Dominican foresaw would be soon greater even than those of royalty itself; and which, he imagined, by scourging earth, would redound to the interests of Heaven.

The strange disappearance of Almamen, which was distorted and exaggerated, by the credulity of the Spaniards, into an event of the most terrific character, served to complete the chain of evidence against the wealthy Jews, and Jew-descended Spaniards, of Andalusia; and while, in imagination, the king already clutched the gold of their redemption here, the Dominican kindled the flame that was to light them to punishment hereafter.

Boabdil and his chiefs received the intelligence of the Spanish retreat with a doubt which soon yielded to the most triumphant delight. Boabdil at once resumed all the energy for which, though but by fits and starts, his earlier youth had been remarkable.

"Alla Achbar! God is great!" cried he, — "we will not remain here till it suit the foe to confine the eagle again to his eyrie. They have left us — we will burst on them. Summon our alfaquis, we will proclaim a holy war! The sovereign of the last possessions of the Moors is in the field. Not a town that contains a Moslem but shall receive our summons, and we will gather round our standard all the children of our faith!"

"May the king live for ever!" cried the council, with one voice.

"Lose not a moment," resumed Boabdil, — "on to the Vivarrambla, marshal the troops — Muza heads the cavalry, myself our foot. Ere the sun's shadow reach yonder forest, our army shall be on its march."

The warriors, hastily and in joy, left the palace; and, when he was alone, Boabdil again relapsed into his wonted irresolution. After striding to and fro for some minutes in anxious thought, he abruptly quitted the hall of council, and passed into the more private chambers of the palace, till he came to a door strongly guarded by plates of iron. It yielded easily, however, to a small key which he carried in his girdle; and Boabdil stood in a small circular room, apparently without other door or outlet: but, after looking cautiously round, the king touched a secret spring in the wall, which, giving way, discovered a niche, in which stood a small lamp, burning with the purest naphtha, and a scroll of yellow parchment covered with strange letters and hieroglyphics. He thrust the scroll in his bosom, took the lamp in his hand, and pressing another spring within the niche, the wall receded and shewed a narrow and winding staircase. The king reclosed the entrance, and descended: the stairs led, at last, into damp and rough passages; and the murmur of waters, that reached his ear through the thick walls, indicated the subterranean nature of the soil through which they were hewn. The lamp burned clear and steady through the darkness of the place; and Boabdil proceeded with such impatient rapidity, that the distance (in reality, considerable) which he traversed, before he arrived at his destined bourne, was quickly measured. He came, at last, into a wide cavern, guarded by doors concealed and secret as those which had screened the entrance from the upper air. He was in one of the

many vaults which made the mighty cemetery of the monarchs of Granada; and before him stood the robed and crowned skeleton, and before him glowed the magic dial-plate, of which he had spoken in his interview with Muza.

"Oh, dread and awful image!" cried the king, throwing himself on his knees before the skeleton; "shadow of what was once a king, wise in council, and terrible in war; if in those hollow bones yet lurks the impalpable and unseen spirit, hear thy repentant son. Forgive, while it is yet time, the rebellion of his fiery youth, and suffer thy daring soul to animate the doubt and weakness of his own. I go forth to battle, waiting not the signal thou didst ordain. Let not the penance for a rashness, to which fate urges me on, attach to my country, but to me. And if I perish in the field, may my evil destinies be buried with me, and a worthier monarch redeem my errors, and preserve Granada!"

As the king raised his looks, the unrelaxed grin of the grim dead, made yet more hideous by the mockery of the diadem and the royal robe, froze back to ice the passion and sorrow at his heart. He shuddered, and rose with a deep sigh; when, as his eyes mechanically followed the lifted arm of the skeleton, he beheld, with mingled delight and awe, the hitherto motionless finger of the dial-plate pass slowly on, and rest at the word so long and so impatiently desired. "Arm!" cried the king, — "do I read aright? are my prayers heard?" A low and deep sound, like that of subterranean thunder, boomed through the chamber; and in the same instant the wall opened, and the king beheld the long-expected figure of Almamen, the magician. But no longer was that stately form clad in the loose and peaceful garb of the

eastern santon. Complete armour cased his broad breast and sinewy limbs; his head alone was bare, and his prominent and impressive features were lighted, not with mystical enthusiasm, but with warlike energy. In his right hand he carried a drawn sword — his left supported the staff of a snow-white and dazzling banner.

So sudden was the apparition, and so excited the mind of the king, that the sight of a supernatural being could scarcely have impressed him with more amaze and awe.

“King of Granada,” said Almamen, “the hour hath come at last: go forth and conquer! With the Christian monarch there is no hope of peace or compact. At thy request I sought him, but my spells alone preserved the life of thy herald. Rejoice! for thine evil destinies have rolled away from thy spirit, like a cloud from the glory of the sun. The genii of the East have woven this banner from the rays of benignant stars. It shall beam before thee in the front of battle — it shall rise over the rivers of Christian blood. As the moon sways the bosom of the tides, it shall sway and direct the surges and the course of war!”

“Man of mystery! thou hast given me a new life.”

“And, fighting by thy side,” resumed Almamen, “I will assist to carve out for thee, from the ruins of Arragon and Castile, the grandeur of a new throne. Arm, monarch of Granada! — arm! I hear the neigh of thy charger, in the midst of the mailed thousands! Arm!”

CHAPTER I.

B O O K IV.

CHAPTER I.

Leila in the castle. — The siege.

THE calmer contemplations, and more holy anxieties of Leila, were, at length, broken in upon by intelligence, the fearful interest of which absorbed the whole mind and care of every inhabitant of the castle. Boabdil el Chico had taken the field, at the head of a numerous army. Rapidly scouring the country, he had descended, one after one, upon the principal fortresses which Ferdinand had left, strongly garrisoned, in the immediate neighbourhood. His success was as immediate as it was signal; the terror of his arms began, once more, to spread far and wide; every day swelled his ranks with new recruits; from the snow-clad summits of the Sierra Nevada, poured down, in wild hordes, the fierce mountain race, who, accustomed to eternal winter, made a strange contrast, in their rugged appearance and shaggy clothing, to the glittering and civilised soldiery of Granada.

Moorish towns, which had submitted to Ferdinand, broke from their allegiance, and sent their ardent youth and experienced veterans to the standard of the Keys and Crescent. To add to the sudden panic of the Spaniards, it went forth that a formidable magician, who seemed inspired rather with the fury of a demon than the valour of a man, had made an abrupt appearance in the ranks of the Moslems. Wherever the Moors shrunk back from

wall or tower, down which poured the boiling pitch, or rolled the deadly artillery of the besieged, this sorcerer — rushing into the midst of the flagging force, and waving, with wild gestures, a white banner, supposed, by both Moor and Christian, to be the work of magic and preternatural spells — dared every danger, and escaped every weapon: with voice, with prayer, with example, he fired the Moors to an enthusiasm that revived the first days of Mahometan conquest; and tower after tower, along the mighty range of the mountain chain of fortresses, was polluted by the wave and glitter of the ever victorious banner. The veteran, Mendo de Quexada, who, with a garrison of two hundred and fifty men, held the castle of Alhendin, was, however, undaunted by the unprecedented successes of Boabdil. Aware of the approaching storm, he spent the days of peace yet accorded to him, in making every preparation for the siege that he foresaw: messengers were despatched to Ferdinand; new out-works were added to the castle; ample store of provisions laid in; and no precaution omitted that could still preserve to the Spaniards a fortress, that, from its vicinity to Granada, its command of the Vega and the valleys of the Alpuxarras, was the bitterest thorn in the side of the Moorish power.

It was early, one morning, that Leila stood by the lattice of her lofty chamber, gazing, with many and mingled emotions, on the distant domes of Granada, as they slept in the silent sunshine. Her heart, for the moment, was busy with the thoughts of home, and the chances and peril of the time were forgotten.

The sound of martial music, afar off, broke upon her reveries; she started, and listened breathlessly: it became more distinct and clear. The clash of the zell, the

boom of the African drum, and the wild and barbarous blast of the Moorish clarion, were now each distinguishable from the other; and, at length, as she gazed and listened, winding along the steeps of the mountain were seen the gleaming spears and pennants of the Moslem vanguard. Another moment, and the whole castle was astir.

Mendo de Quexada, hastily arming, repaired, himself, to the battlements; and, from her lattice, Leila beheld him, from time to time, stationing to the best advantage his scanty troops. In a few minutes she was joined by Donna Inez and the women of the castle, who fearfully clustered round their mistress, — not the less disposed, however, to gratify the passion of the sex, by a glimpse through the lattice as the gorgeous array of the Moorish army.

The casements of Leila's chamber were peculiarly adapted to command a safe nor insufficient view of the progress of the enemy; and, with a beating heart and flushing cheek, the Jewish maiden, deaf to the voices around her, imagined she could already descry, amidst the horsemen, the lion port and snowy garments of Muza Ben Abil Gazan.

What a situation was hers! Already a Christian, could she hope for the success of the infidel? ever a woman, could she hope for the defeat of her lover? But the time for meditation on her destiny was but brief; the detachment of the Moorish cavalry was now just without the walls of the little town that girded the castle, and the loud clarion of the heralds summoned the garrison to surrender.

"Not while one stone stands upon another!" was the short answer of Quexada; and, in ten minutes afterwards,

the sullen roar of the artillery broke from wall and tower over the vales below.

It was then that the women, from Leila's lattice, beheld, slowly marshalling themselves in order, the whole power and pageantry of the besieging army. Thick — serried — line after line, column upon column — they spread below the frowning steep. The sunbeams lighted up that goodly array, as it swayed, and murmured, and advanced, like the billows of a glittering sea. The royal standard was soon descried waving above the pavilion of Boabdil; and the king himself, mounted on his cream-coloured charger, which was covered with trappings of cloth-of-gold, was recognised amongst the infantry, whose task it was to lead the assault.

“Pray with us, my daughter!” cried Inez, falling on her knees. — Alas! what could Leila pray for?

Four days and four nights passed away in that memorable siege; for the moon, then at her full, allowed no respite, even in night itself. Their numbers, and their vicinity to Granada, gave the besiegers the advantage of constant relays, and troop succeeded to troop; so that the weary had ever successors in the vigour of new assailants.

On the fifth day, all of the town — all of the fortress, save the keep (an immense tower), were in the hands of the Moslems; and in this last hold, the worn-out and scanty remnant of the garrison mustered, in the last hope of a brave despair.

Quexada appeared, covered with gore and dust — his eyes bloodshot, his cheek haggard and hollow, his locks blanched with sudden age — in the hall of the tower, where the women, half dead with terror, were assembled.

"Food!" cried he, — "food and wine! — it may be our last banquet."

His wife threw her arms round him. "Not yet," he cried, "not yet; we will have one embrace before we part."

"Is there, then, no hope?" said Inez, with a pale cheek, yet steady eye.

"None; unless to-morrow's dawn gild the spears of Ferdinand's army upon yonder hills. Till morn we may hold out." As he spoke, he hastily devoured some morsels of food, drained a huge goblet of wine, and abruptly quitted the chamber.

At that moment, the women distinctly heard the loud shouts of the Moors; and Leila, approaching the grated casement, could perceive the approach of what seemed to her like moving walls.

Covered by ingenious constructions of wood and thick hides, the besiegers advanced to the foot of the tower in comparative shelter from the burning streams which still poured, fast and seething, from the battlements; while, in the rear, came showers of darts and cross-bolts from the more distant Moors, protecting the work of the engineers, and piercing through almost every loophole and crevice in the fortress.

Meanwhile, the stalwart governor beheld, with dismay and despair, the preparations of the engineers, whom the wooden screen-works protected from every weapon.

"By the holy sepulchre!" cried he, gnashing his teeth, "they are mining the tower, and we shall be buried in its ruins! Look out, Gonsalvo! see you not a gleam of spears, yonder, over the mountains? Mine eyes are dim with watching."

"Alas! brave Mendo, it is only the sloping sun upon the snows — but there is hope yet."

The soldier's words terminated in a shrill and sudden cry of agony; and he fell dead by the side of Quexada, the brain crushed by a bolt from a Moorish arquebuss.

"My best warrior!" said Quexada; "peace be with him! Ho, there! see you yon desperate infidel urging on the miners? By the heavens above, it is he of the white banner! — it is the sorcerer! Fire on him! he is without the shelter of the woodworks."

Twenty shafts, from wearied and nerveless arms, fell innocuous round the form of Almamen: and as, waving aloft his ominous banner, he disappeared again behind the screen-works, the Spaniards almost fancied they could hear his exalting and demon laugh.

The sixth day came, and the work of the enemy was completed. The tower was entirely undermined — the foundations rested only upon wooden props, which, with a humanity that was characteristic of Boabdil, had been placed there in order that the besieged might escape ere the final crash of their last hold.

It was now noon: the whole Moorish force, quitting the plain, occupied the steep that spread below the tower, in multitudinous array and breathless expectation. The miners stood aloof — the Spaniards lay prostrate and exhausted upon the battlements, like mariners, who, after every effort against the storm, await, resigned and almost indifferent, the sweep of the fatal surge.

Suddenly the lines of the Moors gave way; and Boabdil himself, with Muza at his right hand, and Almamen on his left, advanced towards the foot of the tower. At the same time, the Ethiopian guards, each bearing a

torch, marched slowly in the rear; and from the midst of them paced the royal herald, and sounded the last warning. The hush of the immense armament — the glare of the torches, lighting the ebon faces and giant forms of their bearers — the majestic appearance of the king himself — the heroic aspect of Muza — the bare head and glittering banner of Almamen — all combined with the circumstances of the time to invest the spectacle with something singularly awful, and, perhaps, sublime.

Quexada turned his eyes, mutely, round the ghastly faces of his warriors, and still made not the signal. His lips muttered — his eyes glared: when, suddenly, he heard below the wail of women; and the thought of Inez, the bride of his youth, the partner of his age, came upon him; and, with a trembling hand, he lowered the yet unquailing standard of Spain. Then, the silence below broke into a mighty shout, which shook the grim tower to its unsteady and temporary base.

“Arise, my friends,” he said, with a bitter sigh; “we have fought like men — and our country will not blush for us.”

He descended the winding stairs — his soldiers followed him with faltering steps: the gates of the keep unfolded, and these gallant Christians surrendered themselves to the Moor.

“Do with *us* as you will,” said Quexada, as he laid the keys at the hoofs of Boabdil’s barb; “but, there are women in the garrison, who —”

“Are sacred,” interrupted the king. “At once we accord their liberty, and free transport whithersoever ye would desire. Speak, then! To what place of safety shall they be conducted?”

"Generous king!" replied the veteran Quexada, brushing away his tears with the back of his hand; "you take the sting from our shame. We accept your offer, in the same spirit in which it is made. Across the mountains, on the verge of the plain of Olfadez, I possess a small castle, ungarrisoned and unfortified. Thence, should the war take that direction, the women can readily obtain safe conduct to the queen, at Cordova."

"Be it so," returned Boabdil. Then, with oriental delicacy, selecting the eldest of the officers round him, he gave him instructions to enter the castle, and, with a strong guard, provide for the safety of the women, according to the directions of Quexada. To another of his officers he confided the Spanish prisoners, and gave the signal to his army to withdraw from the spot, leaving only a small body to complete the ruin of the fortress.

Accompanied by Almamen and his principal officers, Boabdil now hastened towards Granada; and while, with slower progress, Quexada and his companions, under a strong escort, took their way across the Vega, a sudden turn in their course brought abruptly before them the tower they had so valiantly defended. There it still stood, proud and stern, amidst the blackened and broken wrecks around it, shooting aloft, dark and grim, against the sky. Another moment, and a mighty crash sounded on their ears; while the tower fell to the earth, amidst volumes of wreathing smoke and showers of dust, which were borne, by the concussion, to the spot on which they took their last gaze of the proudest fortress on which the Moors of Granada had beheld, from their own walls, the standard of Arragon and Castile.

At the same time, Leila, — thus brought so strangely within the very reach of her father and her lover, and yet, by a mysterious fate, still devided from both, — with Donna Inez, and the rest of the females of the garrison, pursued her melancholy path along the ridges of the mountains.

CHAPTER II.

Almamen's proposed enterprise — The three Israelites — Circumstance impresses each character with a varying die.

BOABDIL followed up his late success with a series of brilliant assaults on the neighbouring fortresses. Granada, like a strong man bowed to the ground, wrenched, one after one, the bands that had crippled her liberty and strength; and, at length, after regaining a considerable portion of the surrounding territory, the king resolved to lay siege to the sea-port of Salobrena. Could he obtain this town, Boabdil, by establishing communication between the sea and Granada, would both be enabled to avail himself of the assistance of his African allies, and also prevent the Spaniards from cutting off supplies to the city, should they again besiege it. Thither, then, accompanied by Muza, the Moorish king bore his victorious standard.

On the eve of his departure, Almamen sought the king's presence. A great change had come over the santon since the departure of Ferdinand: his wonted stateliness of mien was gone; his eyes were sunk and hollow; his manner, disturbed and absent. In fact,

his love for his daughter made [the sole softness of his character; and that daughter was in the hands of the king who had sentenced the father to the tortures of the Inquisition! To what dangers might she not be subjected, by the intolerant zeal of conversion! and could that frame, and gentle heart, brave the terrific engines that might be brought against her fears? "Better," thought he, "that she should perish, even by the torture, than adopt that hated faith." He gnashed his teeth in agony at either alternative. His dreams, his objects, his revenge, his ambition — all forsook him: one single hope, one thought, completely mastered his stormy passions and fitful intellect.

In this mood the pretended santón met Boabdil. He represented to the king, over whom his influence had prodigiously increased since the late victories of the Moors, the necessity of employing the armies of Ferdinand at a distance. He proposed, in furtherance of this policy, to venture himself in Cordova; to endeavour secretly to stir up those Moors in that, their ancient, kingdom, who had succumbed to the Spanish yoke, and whose hopes might naturally be inflamed by the recent successes of Boabdil; and, at least, to foment such disturbances as might afford the king sufficient time to complete his designs, and recruit his force by aid of the powers with which he was in league.

The representations of Almamen at length conquered Boabdil's reluctance to part with his sacred guide; and it was finally arranged that the Israelite should at once depart from the city.

As Almamen pursued homeward his solitary way, he found himself suddenly accosted in the Hebrew tongue. He turned hastily, and saw before him an

old man in the Jewish gown: he recognised Elias, one of the wealthiest and most eminent of the race of Israel.

"Pardon me, wise countryman!" said the Jew, bowing to the earth, "but I cannot resist the temptation of claiming kindred with one, through whom the horn of Israel may be so triumphantly exalted."

"Hush, man!" said Almamen quickly, and looking sharply round; "I thy countryman! Art thou not, as thy speech betokens, an Israelite?"

"Yea," returned the Jew, "and of the same tribe as thy honoured father — peace be with his ashes! I remembered thee at once, boy though thou wert when thy steps shook off the dust against Granada. I remembered thee, I say, at once, on thy return; but I have kept thy secret, trusting that, through thysoul and genius, thy fallen brethren might put off sackcloth, and feast upon the housetops."

Almamen looked hard at the keen, sharp, Arab features of the Jew; and, at length, he answered, "And how can Israel be restored? wilt thou fight for her?"

"I am too old, son of Issachar, to bear arms; but our tribes are many, and our youth strong. Amid these disturbances between dog and dog —"

"The lion may get his own," interrupted Almamen, impetuously, — "let us hope it. Hast thou heard of the new persecutions against us, that the false Nazarene king has already commenced in Cordova — persecutions that make the heart sick and the blood cold?"

"Alas!" replied Elias, "such woes, indeed, have not failed to reach mine ear; and I have kindred, near

and beloved kindred, wealthy and honoured men, scattered throughout that land."

"Were it not better that they should die on the field than by the rack?" exclaimed Almamen, fiercely. "God of my fathers! if there be yet a spark of manhood left amongst thy people, let thy servant fan it to a flame, that shall burn as the fire burns the stubble, so that the earth may be bare before the blaze!"

"Nay," said Elias, dismayed rather than excited by the vehemence of his comrade,—"be not rash, son of Issachar, be not rash: peradventure thou wilt but exasperate the wrath of the rulers, and our substance thereby will be utterly consumed."

Almamen drew back, placed his hand quietly on the Jew's shoulder, looked him hard in the face, and, gently laughing, turned away.

Elias did not attempt to arrest his steps. "Impracticable," he muttered; "impracticable and dangerous! I always thought so. He may do us harm: were he not so strong and fierce, I would put my knife under his left rib. Verily, gold is a great thing; and—out on me! the knaves at home will be wasting the oil, now they know old Elias is abroad." Thereat the Jew drew his cloak round him, and quickened his pace.

Almamen, in the meanwhile, sought, through dark and subterranean passages, known only to himself, his accustomed home. He passed much of the night alone; but, ere the morning star announced to the mountaintops the presence of the sun, he stood, prepared for his journey, in his secret vault, by the door of the subterranean passages, with old Ximen beside him.

"I go, Ximen," said Almamen, "upon a doubtful quest: whether I discover my daughter, and succeed in bearing her in safety from their contaminating grasp, or whether I fall into their snares and perish, there is an equal chance that I may return no more to Granada. Should this be so, you will be heir to such wealth as I leave in these places; I know that your age will be consoled for the lack of children, when your eyes look upon the laugh of gold."

Ximen bowed low, and mumbled out some inaudible protestations and thanks. Almamen sighed heavily as he looked round the room. "I have evil omens in my soul, and evil prophecies in my books," said he, mournfully. "But the worst is here," he added, putting his finger significantly to his temples; "the string is stretched — one more blow would snap it."

As he thus said, he opened the door, and vanished through that labyrinth of galleries, by which he was enabled at all times to reach unobserved either the palace of the Alhambra, or the gardens without the gates of the city.

Ximen remained behind a few moments, in deep thought. "All mine if he dies!" said he; "all mine if he does not return! All mine, all mine! and I have not a child nor a kinsman in the world to clutch it away from me!" With that he locked the vault, and returned to the upper air.

CHAPTER III.

The fugitive and the meeting.

IN their different directions the rival kings were equally successful. Salobrena, but lately conquered by the Christians, was thrown into a commotion by the first glimpse of Boabdil's banners; the populace rose, beat back their Christian guards, and opened the gates to the last of their race of kings. The garrison alone, to which the Spaniards retreated, resisted Boahdil's arms; and, defended by impregnable walls, promised an obstinate and bloody siege.

Meanwhile, Ferdinand had no sooner entered Cordova, than his extensive scheme of confiscation and holy persecution commenced. Not only did more than five hundred Jews perish in the dark and secret gripe of the grand inquisitor, but several hundred of the wealthiest Christian families, in whose blood was detected the hereditary Jewish taint, were thrown into prison; and such as were most fortunate purchased life by the sacrifice of half their treasures. At this time, however, there suddenly broke forth a formidable insurrection amongst these miserable subjects — the Messenians of the Iberian Sparta. The Jews were so far aroused from their long debasement by omnipotent despair, that a single spark, falling on the ashes of their ancient spirit, rekindled the flame of the descendants of the fierce warriors of Palestine. They were encouraged and assisted by the suspected Christians,

who had been involved in the same persecution; and the whole were headed by a man who appeared suddenly amongst them, and whose fiery eloquence and martial spirit produced, at such a season, the most fervent enthusiasm. Unhappily, the whole details of this singular outbreak are withheld from us; only by wary hints and guarded allusions do the Spanish chroniclers apprise us of its existence and its perils. It is clear that all narrative of an event, that might afford the most dangerous precedents, and was alarming to the pride and avarice of the Spanish king, as well as the pious zeal of the church, was strictly forbidden; and the conspiracy was hushed in the dread silence of the Inquisition, into whose hands the principal conspirators ultimately fell. We learn, only, that a determined and sanguinary struggle was followed by the triumph of Ferdinand, and the complete extinction of the treason.

It was one evening that a solitary fugitive, hard chased by an armed troop of the brothers of St. Hermandad, was seen emerging from a wild and rocky defile, which opened abruptly on the gardens of a small, and, by the absence of fortification and sentries, seemingly deserted, castle. Behind him, in the exceeding stillness which characterises the air of a Spanish twilight, he heard, at a considerable distance, the blast of the horn and the tramp of hoofs. His pursuers, divided into several detachments, were scouring the country after him, as the fishermen draw their nets, from bank to bank, conscious that the prey they drive before the meshes cannot escape them at the last. The fugitive halted in doubt, and gazed round him: he was well nigh exhausted; his eyes were bloodshot; the large drops rolled fast down his brow; his whole frame

quivered and palpitated, like that of a stag when he stands at bay. Beyond the castle spread a broad plain, far as the eye could reach, without shrub or hollow to conceal his form: flight across a space so favourable to his pursuers was evidently in vain. No alternative was left, unless he turned back on the very path taken by the horsemen, or trusted to such scanty and perilous shelter as the copses in the castle garden might afford him. He decided on the latter refuge, cleared the low and lonely wall that girded the demesne, and plunged into a thicket of overhanging oaks and chestnuts.

At that hour, and in that garden, by the side of a little fountain, were seated two females: the one of mature and somewhat advanced years; the other, in the flower of virgin youth. But the flower was prematurely faded; and neither the bloom, nor sparkle, nor undulating play of feature, that should have suited her age, was visible in the marble paleness and contemplative sadness of her beautiful countenance.

"Alas! my young friend," said the elder of these ladies, "it is in these hours of solitude and calm that we are most deeply impressed with the nothingness of life. Thou, my sweet convert, art now the object, no longer of my compassion, but my envy: and earnestly do I feel convinced of the blessed repose thy spirit will enjoy in the lap of the Mother Church. Happy are they who die young; but thrice happy they who die in the spirit rather than the flesh: dead to sin, but not to virtue; to terror, not to hope; to man, but not to God!"

"Dear señora," replied the young maiden, mournfully, "were I alone on earth, Heaven is my witness with what deep and thankful resignation I should take

the holy vows, and forswear the past: but the heart remains human, however divine the hope that it may cherish. And sometimes I start, and think of home, of childhood, of my strange but beloved father, deserted and childless in his old age."

"Thine, Leila," returned the elder señora, "are but the sorrows our nature is doomed to. What matter whether absence or death sever the affections? Thou lamentest a father; I, a son, dead in the pride of his youth and beauty — a husband, languishing in the fetters of the Moor. Take comfort for thy sorrows, in the reflection that sorrow is the heritage of all."

Ere Leila could reply, the orange-boughs that sheltered the spot where they sat were put aside, and between the women and the fountain stood the dark form of Almamen, the Israelite. Leila rose, shrieked, and flung herself, unconscious, on his breast.

"O Lord of Israel!" cried Almamen, in a tone of deep anguish, "do I, then, at last regain my child? do I press her to my heart? and is it only for that brief moment, when I stand upon the brink of death? Leila, my child, look up! smile upon thy father: let him feel, on his maddening and burning brow, the sweet breath of the last of his race, and bear with him, at least, one holy and gentle thought to the dark grave."

"My father! is it indeed my father?" said Leila, recovering herself, and drawing back, that she might assure herself of that familiar face; "it is thou! it is — it is! Oh! what blessed chance brings us together?"

"That chance is the destiny that now guides me to my tomb," answered Almamen, solemnly. "Hark!

hear you not the sound of their rushing steeds — their impatient voices? They are on me now!”

“Who? Of whom speakest thou?”

“My pursuers — the horsemen of the Spaniard.”

“Oh, señora, save him!” cried Leila, turning to Donna Inez, whom both father and child had hitherto forgotten, and who now stood gazing upon Almamen with wondering and anxious eyes. “Whither can he fly? The vaults of the castle may conceal him. This way — hasten!”

“Stay,” said Inez, trembling, and approaching close to Almamen: “do I see aright? and, amidst the dark change of years and trial, do I recognise that stately form, which once contrasted to the sad eye of a mother the drooping and faded form of her only son? Art thou not he who saved my boy from the pestilence, who accompanied him to the shores of Naples, and consigned him to these arms? Look on me! dost thou not recall the mother of thy friend?”

“I recall thy features, dimly and as in a dream,” answered the Hebrew; “and, while thou speakest, rush upon me the memories of an earlier time, in lands where Leila first looked upon the day, and her mother sung to me at sunset, by the rush of the Euphrates, and on the sites of departed empires. Thy son — I remember now: I had friendship then with a Christian — for I was still young.”

“Waste not the time — father — señora!” cried Leila, impatiently, clinging still to her father’s breast.

“You are right; nor shall your sire, in whom I thus wonderfully recognise my son’s friend, perish, if I can save him.”

Inez then conducted her strange guest to a small

door in the rear of the castle; and, after leading him through some of the principal apartments, left him in one of the wardrobes, or tiring-rooms, adjoining her own chamber, and the entrance to which the arras concealed. She rightly judged this a safer retreat than the vaults of the castle might afford, since her great name and known intimacy with Isabel would preclude all suspicion of her abetting in the escape of the fugitive, and keep those places the most secure in which, without such aid, he could not have secreted himself.

In a few minutes, several of the troop arrived at the castle; and, on learning the name of its owner, contented themselves with searching the gardens, and the lower and more exposed apartments; and then, recommending to the servants a vigilant look-out, remounted, and proceeded to scour the plain, over which now slowly fell the starlight and shade of night.

When Leila stole, at last, to the room in which Almamen was hid, she found him, stretched on his mantle, in a deep sleep. Exhausted by all he had undergone, and his rigid nerves, as it were, relaxed by the sudden softness of that interview with his child, the slumber of that fiery wanderer was as calm as an infant's. And their relation almost seemed reversed, and the daughter to be as a mother watching over her offspring, when Leila seated herself softly by him, fixing her eyes — to which the tears came ever, ever to be brushed away — upon his worn but tranquil features, made yet more serene by the quiet light that glimmered through the casement. And so passed the hours of that night; and the father and the child — the meek convert, the revengeful fanatic — were under the same roof.

CHAPTER IV.

Almamen hears and sees, but refuses to believe; for the brain, overwrought, grows dull, even in the keenest.

THE dawn broke slowly upon the chamber, and Almamen still slept. It was the Sabbath of the Christians — that day on which the Saviour rose from the dead; thence named, so emphatically and sublimely, by the early church, THE LORD'S DAY.* And as the ray of the sun flashed in the East, it fell, like a glory, over a crucifix, placed in the deep recess of the Gothic casement; and brought startlingly before the eyes of Leila that face, upon which the rudest of the Catholic sculptors rarely fail to preserve the mystic and awful union of the expiring anguish of the man, with the lofty patience of the God. It looked upon her, that face; it invited, it encouraged, while it thrilled and subdued. She stole gently from the side of her father; she crept to the spot, and flung herself on her knees, beside the consecrated image.

“Support me, O Redeemer!” she murmured, — “support thy creature! strengthen her steps in the blessed path, though it divide her irrevocably from all that on earth she loves: and, if there be a sacrifice in her solemn choice, accept, O Thou, the Crucified! accept it, in part atonement of the crime of her stub-

* Before the Christian era, the Sunday was, however, called the Lord's day, *i. e.* the day of the Lord the Sun.

born race; and, hereafter, let the lips of a maiden of Judæa implore thee, not in vain, for some mitigation of the awful curse that hath fallen justly upon her tribe."

As, broken by low sobs, and in a choked and muttered voice, Leila poured forth her prayer, she was startled by a deep groan; and, turning in alarm, she saw that Almamen had awaked, and, leaning on his arm, was now bending upon her his dark eyes, once more gleaming with all their wonted fire.

"Speak," he said, as she coweringly hid her face; "speak to me, or I shall be turned to stone by one horrid thought. It is not before that symbol that thou kneelest in adoration; and my sense wanders, if it tell me that thy broken words expressed the worship of an apostate! In mercy, speak!"

"Father!" began Leila; but her lips refused to utter more than that touching and holy word.

Almamen rose, and, plucking the hands from her face, gazed on her some moments, as if he would penetrate her very soul; and Leila, recovering her courage in the pause, by degrees, met his eyes, unquailing — her pure and ingenuous brow raised to his, and sadness, but not guilt, speaking from every line of that lovely face.

"Thou dost not tremble," said Almamen, at length, breaking the silence, — "and I have erred. Thou art not the criminal I deemed thee. Come to my arms!"

"Alas!" said Leila, obeying the instinct, and casting herself upon that rugged bosom, — "I will dare, at least, not to disavow my God. Father! by that dread anathema which is on our race, which has made us homeless and powerless — outcasts and strangers in the land; by the persecution and anguish

we have known, teach thy lordly heart that we are rightly punished, for the persecution and the anguish we doomed to Him, whose footstep hallowed our native earth! FIRST, IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD, DID THE STERN HEBREWS INFLICT UPON MANKIND THE AWFUL CRIME OF PERSECUTION FOR OPINION'S SAKE. The seed we sowed hath brought forth the Dead Sea fruit upon which we feed. I asked for resignation and for hope: I looked upon yonder cross, and I found both. Harden not thy heart; listen to thy child; wise though thou be, and weak though her woman spirit, listen to me."

"Be dumb!" cried Almamen, in such a voice as might have come from the charnel, so ghostly and deathly sounded its hollow tone; then, recoiling some steps, he placed both his hands upon his temples, and muttered, "mad, mad! yes, yes, — this is but a delirium — and I am tempted with a devil! Oh, my child!" he resumed, in a voice that became, on the sudden, inexpressibly tender and imploring, — "I have been sorely tried; and I dreamt a feverish dream of passion and revenge. Be thine the lips, and thine the soothing hand, that shall wake me from it. Let us fly for ever from these hated lands; let us leave to these miserable infidels their bloody contest, careless which shall fall. To a soil on which the iron heel does not clang, to an air where man's orisons rise, in solitude, to the Great Jehovah, let us hasten our wearied steps. Come! while the castle yet sleeps, let us forth unseen — the father and the child. We will hold sweet commune by the way. And, hark ye, Leila," he added, in a low and abrupt whisper, "talk not to me of yonder

symbol; for thy God is a jealous God, and hath no likeness in the graven image."

Had he been less exhausted by long travail and racking thoughts, far different, perhaps, would have been the language of a man so stern. But circumstance impresses the hardest substance; and despite his native intellect, and affected superiority over others, no one, perhaps, was more human, in his fitful moods, — his weakness and his strength, his passion and his purpose, — than that strange man, who had dared, in his dark studies, and arrogant self-will, to aspire beyond humanity.

That was, indeed, a perilous moment for the young convert. The unexpected softness of her father utterly subdued her; nor was she yet sufficiently possessed of that all-denying zeal of the Catholic enthusiast, to which every human tie, and earthlier duty, has been often sacrificed, on the shrine of a rapt and metaphysical piety. Whatever her opinions, her new creed, her secret desire of the cloister — fed, as it was, by the sublime, though fallacious notion, that in her conversion, her sacrifice, the crimes of her race might be expiated, in the eyes of Him whose death had been the great atonement of a world; whatever such higher thoughts and sentiments, they gave way, at that moment, to the irresistible impulse of household nature and of filial duty. Should she desert her father, and could that desertion be a virtue? her heart put and answered both questions in a breath. She approached Almamen, placed her hand in his, and said, steadily and calmly, "Father, wheresoever thou goest, I will wend with thee."

But Heaven ordained to each another destiny than might have been theirs, had the dictates of that impulse been fulfilled.

Ere Almamen could reply, a trumpet sounded clear and loud at the gate.

"Hark!" he said, gripping his dagger, and starting back to a sense of the dangers round him. "They come — my pursuers and my murderers! but these limbs are sacred from the rack."

Even that sound of ominous danger was almost a relief to Leila: "I will go," she said, "and learn what the blast betokens; remain here — be cautious — I will return."

Several minutes, however, elapsed, before Leila reappeared: she was accompanied by Donna Inez, whose paleness and agitation betokened her alarm. A courier had arrived at the gate to announce the approach of the queen, who, with a considerable force, was on her way to join Ferdinand, then, in the usual rapidity of his movements, before one of the Moorish towns that had revolted from his allegiance. It was impossible for Almamen to remain in safety in the castle; and the only hope of escape was departing immediately and in disguise.

"I have," she said, "a trusty and faithful servant with me in the castle, to whom I can, without anxiety, confide the charge of your safety: and even if suspected by the way, my name, and the companionship of my servant, will remove all obstacles; it is not a long journey hence to Guadix, which has already revolted to the Moors: there, till the armies of Ferdinand surround the walls, your refuge may be secure."

Almamen remained for some moments plunged in a gloomy silence. But, at length, he signified his assent to the plan proposed, and Donna Inez hastened to give the directions to his intended guide.

“Leila,” said the Hebrew, when left alone with his daughter, “think not that it is for mine own safety that I stoop to this flight from thee. No: but never till thou wert lost to me, by mine own rash confidence in another, did I know how dear to my heart was the last scion of my race, the sole memorial left to me of thy mother’s love. Regaining thee once more, a new and a soft existence opens upon my eyes; and the earth seems to change, as by a sudden revolution, from winter into spring. For thy sake I consent to use all the means that man’s intellect can devise, for preservation from my foes. Meanwhile, here will rest my soul; to this spot, within one week from this period — no matter through what danger I pass — I shall return: then I shall claim thy promise. I will arrange all things for our flight, and no stone shall harm thy footstep by the way. The Lord of Israel be with thee, my daughter, and strengthen thy heart! But,” he added, tearing himself from her embrace, as he heard steps ascending to the chamber, “deem not that, in this most fond and fatherly affection, I forget what is due to me and thee. Think not that my love is only the brute and insensate feeling of the progenitor to the offspring: I love thee for thy mother’s sake — I love thee for thine own — I love thee yet more for the sake of Israel. If thou perish, if thou art lost to us, thou, the last daughter of the house of Issachar, then the haughtiest family of God’s great people is extinct.”

Here Inez appeared at the door, but withdrew, at the impatient and lordly gesture of Almamen, who, without further heed of the interruption, resumed:

"I look to thee, and thy seed, for the regeneration which I once trusted, fool that I was, mine own day might see effected. Let this pass. Thou art under the roof of the Nazarene. I will not believe that the arts we have resisted against fire and sword can prevail with thee. But, if I err, awful will be the penalty! Could I once know that thou hadst forsaken thy ancestral creed, though warrior and priest stood by thee, though thousands and ten thousands were by thy right hand, this steel should save the race of Issachar from dishonour. Beware! Thou weapest; but, child, I warn, not threaten. God be with thee!"

He wrung the cold hand of his child, turned to the door, and, after such disguise as the brief time allowed him could afford, quitted the castle with his Spanish guide, who, accustomed to the benevolence of his mistress, obeyed her injunction without wonder, though not without suspicion.

The third part of an hour had scarcely elapsed, and the sun was yet on the mountain-tops, when Isabel arrived.

She came to announce that the outbreaks of the Moorish towns in the vicinity rendered the half fortified castle of her friend no longer a secure abode; and she honoured the Spanish lady with a command to accompany her, with her female suite, to the camp of Ferdinand.

Leila received the intelligence with a kind of stupor. Her interview with her father, the strong and fearful contests of emotion which that interview occasioned,

left her senses faint and dizzy; and, when she found herself, by the twilight star, once more with the train of Isabel, the only feeling that stirred actively through her stunned and bewildered mind, was, that the hand of Providence conducted her from a temptation that, the Reader of all hearts knew, the daughter and the woman would have been too feeble to resist.

On the fifth day from his departure, Almamen returned — to find the castle deserted, and his daughter gone.

CHAPTER V.

In the ferment of great events the dregs rise.

THE Israelites did not limit their struggles to the dark conspiracy to which allusion has been made. In some of the Moorish towns that revolted from Ferdinand, they renounced the neutrality they had hitherto maintained between Christian and Moslem. Whether it was that they were inflamed by the fearful and wholesale barbarities enforced by Ferdinand and the Inquisition against their tribe; or whether they were stirred up by one of their own order, in whom was recognised the head of their most sacred family; or whether, as is most probable, both causes combined — certain it is, that they manifested a feeling that was thoroughly unknown to the ordinary habits and policy of that peaceable people. They bore great treasure to the public stock — they demanded arms, and, under their own leaders, were admitted, though with much jealousy and precaution, into the troops of the arrogant and disdainful Moslems.

In this conjunction of hostile planets, Ferdinand had recourse to his favourite policy of wile and stratagem. Turning against the Jews the very treaty Almamen had once sought to obtain in their favour, he caused it to be circulated, privately, that the Jews, anxious to purchase their peace with him, had promised to betray the Moorish towns, and Granada itself, into his hands. The paper, which Ferdinand himself had signed in his interview with Almamen, and of which, on the capture of the Hebrew, he had taken care to repossess himself, he gave to a spy, whom he sent, disguised as a Jew, into one of the revolted cities.

Private intelligence reached the Moorish ringleader of the arrival of this envoy. He was seized, and the document found on his person. The form of the words drawn up by Almamen (who had carefully omitted mention of his own name — whether that which he assumed, or that which, by birth, he should have borne) merely conveyed the compact, that if, by a Jew, within two weeks from the date therein specified, Granada was delivered to the Christian king, the Jews should enjoy certain immunities and rights.

The discovery of this document filled the Moors of the city to which the spy had been sent with a fury that no words can describe. Always distrusting their allies, they now imagined they perceived the sole reason of their sudden enthusiasm, of their demand for arms. The mob rose: the principal Jews were seized and massacred without trial; some by the wrath of the multitude, some by the slower tortures of the magistrate. Messengers were sent to the different revolted towns, and, above all, to Granada itself, to put the Moslems on their guard against these unhappy enemies of either party. At once

covetous and ferocious, the Moors rivalled the Inquisition in their cruelty, and Ferdinand in their extortion.

It was the dark fate of Almamen, as of most premature and heated liberators of the enslaved, to double the terrors and the evils he had sought to cure. The warning arrived at Granada at a time in which the vizier, Jussuf, had received the commands of his royal master, still at the siege of Salobrena, to use every exertion to fill the wasting treasuries. Fearful of new exactions against the Moors, the vizier hailed, as a message from Heaven, so just a pretext for a new and sweeping impost on the Jews. The spendthrift violence of the mob was restrained, because it was headed by the authorities, who were wisely anxious that the state should have no rival in the plunder it required; and the work of confiscation and robbery was carried on with a majestic and calm regularity, which redounded no less to the credit of Jussuf than it contributed to the coffers of the king.

It was late, one evening, when Ximen was making his usual round through the chambers of Almamen's house. As he glanced around at the various articles of wealth and luxury, he, ever and anon, burst into a low fitful chuckle, rubbed his lean hands, and mumbled out, — "If my master should die! if my master should die!"

While thus engaged, he heard a confused and distant shout; and, listening attentively, he distinguished a cry, grown of late sufficiently familiar, of, "Live, Jussuf the just! — perish the traitor Jews!"

"Ah!" said Ximen, as the whole character of his face changed; "some new robbery upon our race! And this is thy work, son of Issachar! Madman that thou wert, to be wiser than thy sires, and seek to dupe the idolaters in the council-chamber and the camp — their

field, their vantage-ground; as the bazaar and the market-place are ours. None suspect that the potent santon is the traitor Jew; but I know it! I could give thee to the bow-string — and, if thou wert dead, all thy goods and gold, even to the mule at the manger, would be old Ximen's."

He paused at that thought, shut his eyes, and smiled at the prospect his fancy conjured up; and, completing his survey, retired to his own chamber, which opened, by a small door, upon one of the back courts. He had scarcely reached the room, when he heard a low tap at the outer door; and, when it was thrice repeated, he knew that it was one of his Jewish brethren. For Ximen — as years, isolation, and avarice gnawed away whatever of virtue once put forth some meagre fruit from a heart naturally bare and rocky — still preserved one human feeling towards his countrymen. It was the bond which unites all the persecuted: and Ximen loved them, because he could not envy their happiness. The power — the knowledge — the lofty, though wild designs of his master, stung and humbled him: he secretly hated, because he could not compassionate or condemn him. But the bowed frame, and slavish voice, and timid nerves of his crushed brotherhood, presented to the old man the likeness of things that could not exult over him. Debased, and aged, and solitary as he was, he felt a kind of wintry warmth in the thought that even *he* had the power to protect!

He thus maintained an intercourse with his fellow Israelites; and often, in their dangers, had afforded them a refuge in the numerous vaults and passages, the ruins of which may still be descried beneath the mouldering foundations of that mysterious mansion. And, as the

house was generally supposed the property of an absent emir, and had been especially recommended to the care of the cadis by Boabdil, who alone of the Moors knew it as one of the dwelling-places of the santón, whose ostensible residence was in apartments allotted to him within the palace, — it was, perhaps, the sole place within Granada which afforded an unsuspected and secure refuge to the hunted Israelites.

When Ximen recognised the wonted signal of his brethren, he crawled to the door; and, after the precaution of a Hebrew watchword, replied to in the same tongue, he gave admittance to the tall and stooping frame of the rich Elias.

“Worthy and excellent master!” said Ximen, after again securing the entrance; “what can bring the honoured and wealthy Elias to the chamber of the poor hireling?”

“My friend,” answered the Jew; “call me not wealthy, nor honoured. For years I have dwelt within the city, safe and respected, even by the Moslemin; verily and because I have purchased, with jewels and treasure, the protection of the king and the great men. But now, alas! in the sudden wrath of the heathen — ever imagining vain things — I have been summoned into the presence of their chief rabbi, and only escaped the torture, by a sum that ten years of labour and the sweat of my brow cannot replace. Ximen! the bitterest thought of all is, that the frenzy of one of our own tribe has brought this desolation upon Israel.”

“My lord speaks riddles,” said Ximen, with well-feigned astonishment in his glassy eyes.

“Why dost thou wind and turn, good Ximen?” said the Jew, shaking his head; “thou knowest well what

my words drive at. Thy master is the pretended Al-mamen; and that recreant Israelite (if Israelite, indeed, still be one who hath forsaken the customs and the forms of his forefathers) is he who hath stirred up the Jews of Cordova and Guadix, and whose folly hath brought upon us these dread things. Holy Abraham! this Jew hath cost me more than fifty Nazarenes and a hundred Moors."

Ximen remained silent; and, the tongue of Elias being loosed by the recollection of his sad loss, the latter continued: "At the first, when the son of Issachar reappeared, and became a counsellor in the king's court, I indeed, who had led him, then a child, to the synagogue — for old Issachar was to me dear as a brother — recognised him by his eyes and voice: but I exulted in his craft and concealment; I believed he would work mighty things for his poor brethren, and would obtain, for his father's friend, the supplying of the king's wives and concubines with raiment and cloth of price. But years have passed: he hath not lightened our burthens; and, by the madness that hath of late come over him, heading the heathen armies, and drawing our brethren into danger and death, he hath deserved the curse of the synagogue, and the wrath of our whole race. I find, from our brethren who escaped the Inquisition by the surrender of their substance, that his unskilful and frantic schemes were the main pretext for the sufferings of the righteous under the Nazarene; and, again, the same schemes bring on us the same oppression from the Moor. Accursed be he, and may his name perish!"

Ximen sighed, but remained silent, conjecturing to what end the Jew would bring his invectives. He was not long in suspense. After a pause, Elias recommenced,

in an altered and more careless tone, "He is rich, this son of Issachar — wondrous rich."

"He has treasures scattered over half the cities of Africa and the Orient," said Ximen.

"Thou seest, thou, my friend, that thy master hath doomed me to a heavy loss. I possess his secret; I could give him up to the king's wrath; I could bring him to the death. But I am just and meek: let him pay my forfeiture, and I will forego mine anger."

"Thou dost not know him," said Ximen, alarmed at the thought of a repayment, which might grievously diminish his own heritage of Almamen's effects in Granada.

"But if I threaten him with exposure?"

"Thou wouldst feed the fishes of the Darro," interrupted Ximen. "Nay, even now, if Almamen learn that thou knowest his birth and race, tremble! for thy days in the land will be numbered."

"Verily," exclaimed the Jew, in great alarm, "then have I fallen into the snare; for these lips revealed to him that knowledge."

"Then is the righteous Elias a lost man, within ten days from that in which Almamen returns to Granada. I know my master: he is a dread man, and blood is to him as water."

"Let the wicked be consumed!" cried Elias, furiously, stamping his foot, while fire flashed from his dark eyes; for the instinct of self-preservation made him fierce. "Not from me, however," he added, more calmly, "will come his danger. Know that there be more than a hundred Jews in this city, who have sworn his death; Jews who, flying hither from Cordova, have seen their parents murdered and their substance seized, and who behold, in the son of Issachar, the cause of the murder and

the spoil. They have detected the impostor, and a hundred knives are whetting even now for his blood: let him look to it. Ximen, I have spoken to thee as the foolish speak; thou mayst betray me to thy lord; but, from what I have learned of thee from our brethren, I have poured my heart into thy bosom without fear. Wilt thou betray Israel, or assist us to smite the traitor?"

Ximen mused a moment, and his meditation conjured up the treasures of his master. He stretched forth his right hand to Elias; and, when the Israelites parted, they were friends.

CHAPTER VI.

Boabdil's return — The reappearance of Ferdinand before Granada.

THE third morning from this interview, a rumour reached Granada that Boabdil had been repulsed in his assault on the citadel of Salobrena with a severe loss; that Hernando del Pulgar had succeeded in conducting to its relief a considerable force; and that the army of Ferdinand was on its march against the Moorish king. In the midst of the excitement occasioned by these reports, a courier arrived to confirm their truth, and to announce the return of Boabdil.

At night-fall, the king, preceding his army, entered the city, and hastened to bury himself in the Alhambra. As he passed, dejectedly, into the women's apartments, his stern mother met him.

"My son," she said, bitterly, "dost thou return, and not a conqueror?"

Before Boabdil could reply, a light and rapid step sped through the glittering arcades; and, weeping with joy, and breaking all the oriental restraints, Amine fell upon his bosom. "My beloved! my king! light of mine eyes! thou hast returned. Welcome — for thou art safe."

The different form of these several salutations struck Boabdil forcibly. "Thou seest, my mother," said he, "how great the contrast between those who love us from affection, and those who love us from pride. In adversity, God keep me, O my mother, from thy tongue!"

"But I love thee from pride, too," murmured Amine; "and for that reason is thine adversity dear to me, for it takes thee from the world to make thee more mine own: and I am proud of the afflictions that my hero shares with his slave."

"Lights there and the banquet!" cried the king, turning from his haughty mother; "we will feast and be merry while we may. My adored Amine, kiss me!"

Proud, melancholy, and sensitive, as he was, in that hour of reverse Boabdil felt no grief: such balm has Love for our sorrows, when its wings are borrowed from the dove! And although the laws of the eastern life, confined to the narrow walls of a harem the sphere of Amine's gentle influence; although, even in romance, THE NATURAL compels us to portray her vivid and rich colours only in a faint and hasty sketch; yet still are left to the outline the loveliest and the noblest features of the sex — the spirit to arouse us to exertion, the softness to console us in our fall!

While Boabdil and the body of the army remained in the city, Muza, with a chosen detachment of the horse, scoured the country to visit the newly acquired cities, and sustain their courage.

From this charge he was recalled by the army of Ferdinand, which once more poured down into the Vega, completely devastated its harvests, and then swept back to consummate the conquests of the revolted towns. To this irruption succeeded an interval of peace — the calm before the storm. From every part of Spain, the most chivalric and resolute of the Moors, taking advantage of the pause in the contest, flocked to Granada; and that city became the focus of all that paganism in Europe possessed of brave and determined spirits.

At length, Ferdinand, completing his conquests, and having refilled his treasury, mustered the whole force of his dominions — forty thousand foot and ten thousand horse; and once more, and for the last time, appeared before the walls of Granada. A solemn and prophetic determination filled both besiegers and besieged: each felt that the crowning crisis was at hand.

CHAPTER VII.

The conflagration — The majesty of an individual passion in the midst of hostile thousands.

It was the eve of a great and general assault upon Granada, deliberately planned by the chiefs of the Christian army. The Spanish camp (the most gorgeous Christendom had ever known) gradually grew calm and hushed. The shades deepened — the stars burned forth more serene and clear. Bright, in that azure air, streamed the silken tents of the court, blazoned with heraldic devices, and crowned by gaudy banners, which, filled by a brisk and murmuring wind from the mountains, flaunted gaily on their gilded staves. In the centre of the camp rose the pavilion of the queen — a palace in itself. Lances made its columns; brocade and painted arras, its walls; and the space covered by its numerous compartments, would have contained the halls and outworks of an ordinary castle. The pomp of that camp realised the wildest dreams of Gothic, coupled with Oriental, splendour; something worthy of a Tasso to have imagined, or a Beckford to create. Nor was the exceeding costliness of the more courtly tents lessened in effect by those of the soldiery in the outskirts, many of which were built from boughs, still retaining their leaves — salvage and picturesque huts; — as if, realising old

legends, wild men of the woods had taken up the cross, and followed the Christian warriors against the swarthy followers of Termagaunt and Mahound. There, then, extended that mighty camp in profound repose, as the midnight threw deeper and longer shadows over the sward from the tented avenues and canvas streets. It was at that hour, that Isabel, in the most private recess of her pavilion, was employed in prayer for the safety of the king, and the issue of the Sacred War. Kneeling before the altar of that warlike oratory, her spirit became rapt and absorbed from earth in the intensity of her devotions; and in the whole camp (save the sentries), the eyes of that pious queen were, perhaps, the only ones unclosed. All was profoundly still; her guards, her attendants, were gone to rest; and the tread of the sentinel, without that immense pavilion, was not heard through the silken walls.

It was then that Isabel suddenly felt a strong grasp upon her shoulder, as she still knelt by the altar. A faint shriek burst from her lips; she turned, and the broad curved knife of an eastern warrior gleamed close before her eyes.

"Hush! utter a cry, breathe but more loudly than thy wont, and, queen though thou art, in the centre of swarming thousands, thou diest!"

Such were the words that reached the ear of the royal Castilian, whispered by a man of stern and commanding, though haggard aspect.

"What is thy purpose? wouldst thou murder me?" said the queen, trembling, perhaps for the first time, before a mortal presence.

"Fear not; thy life is safe, if thou strivest not to elude or to deceive me. Our time is short — answer me. I am Almamen, the Hebrew. Where is the hostage rendered to thy hands? I claim my child. She is with thee — I know it. In what corner of thy camp?"

"Rude stranger!" said Isabel, recovering somewhat from her alarm, — "thy daughter is removed, I trust, for ever, from thine impious reach. She is not within the camp."

"Lie not, Queen of Castile," said Almamen, raising his knife; "for days and weeks I have tracked thy steps, followed thy march, haunted even thy slumbers, though men of mail stood as guards around them; and I know that my daughter has been with thee. Think not I brave this danger without resolves the most fierce and dread. Answer me! where is my child?"

"Many days since," said Isabel, awed, despite herself, by her strange position, — "thy daughter left the camp for the house of God. It was her own desire. The Saviour hath received her into his fold."

Had a thousand lances pierced his heart, the vigour and energy of life could scarce more suddenly have deserted Almamen. The rigid muscles of his countenance relaxed at once, from resolve and menace, into unutterable horror, anguish, and despair. He recoiled several steps; his knees trembled violently; he seemed stunned by a death-blow. Isabel, the boldest and haughtiest of her sex, seized that moment of reprieve; she sprung forward, darted through the draperies into the apartments occupied by her train, and, in a mo-

ment, the pavilion resounded with her cries for aid. The sentinels were aroused; retainers sprang from their pillows; they heard the cause of the alarm; they made to the spot; when, ere they reached its partition of silk, a vivid and startling blaze burst forth upon them. The tent was on fire. The materials fed the flame like magic. Some of the guards had yet the courage to dash forward; but the smoke and the glare drove them back, blinded and dizzy. Isabel herself had scarcely time for escape, so rapid was the conflagration. Alarmed for her husband, she rushed to his tent — to find him already awakened by the noise, and issuing from its entrance, his drawn sword in his hand. The wind, which had a few minutes before but curled the triumphant banners, now circulated the destroying flame. It spread from tent to tent, almost as a flash of lightning that shoots along close-neighbouring clouds. The camp was in one blaze, ere any man could even dream of checking the conflagration.

Not waiting to hear the confused tale of his royal consort, Ferdinand, exclaiming, "The Moors have done this—they will be on us!" ordered the drums to beat and the trumpets to sound, and hastened in person, wrapped merely in his long mantle, to alarm his chiefs. While that well-disciplined and veteran army, fearing every moment the rally of the foe, endeavoured rapidly to form themselves into some kind of order, the flame continued to spread till the whole heavens presented an illumination, the intense and dazzling splendour of which even a Dante might be unable to describe. By its light, cuirass and helmet glowed, as in the furnace, and the armed men seemed rather like life-like and lurid meteors than human forms. The city of Granada was

brought near to them by the intensity of the glow; and, as a detachment of cavalry spurred from the camp to meet the anticipated surprise of the Paynims, they saw, upon the walls and roofs of Granada, the Moslems clustering, and their spears gleaming. But, equally amazed with the Christians, and equally suspicious of craft and design, the Moors did not issue from their gates. Meanwhile the conflagration, as rapid to die as to begin, grew fitful and feeble; and the night seemed to fall with a melancholy darkness over the ruin of that silken city.

Ferdinand summoned his council. He had now perceived it was no ambush of the Moors. The account of Isabel, which, at last, he comprehended; the strange and almost miraculous manner in which Alammen had baffled his guards, and penetrated to the royal tent, might have aroused his Gothic superstition, while it relieved his more earthly apprehensions, if he had not remembered the singular, but far from supernatural, dexterity with which eastern warriors, and even robbers, continued, then as now, to elude the most vigilant precautions, and baffle the most wakeful guards: and it was evident, that the fire which burned the camp of an army, had been kindled merely to gratify the revenge, or favour the escape, of an individual. Shaking, therefore, from his kingly spirit the thrill of superstitious awe that the greatness of the disaster, when associated with the name of a sorcerer, at first occasioned, he resolved to make advantage out of misfortune itself. The excitement, the wrath of the troops, produced the temper most fit for action.

“And God,” said the King of Spain to his knights and chiefs, as they assembled round him, “has, in this conflagration, announced to the warriors of the cross, that henceforth their camp shall be the palaces of Granada! Wo to the Moslem with to-morrow’s sun!”

Arms clanged, and swords leaped from their sheaths, as the Christian knights echoed the anathema — “**WO TO THE MOSLEM!**”

CHAPTER I

The great battle

B O O K V.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

The great battle.

THE day slowly dawned upon that awful night; and the Moors, still upon the battlements of Granada, beheld the whole army of Ferdinand on its march towards their walls. At a distance lay the wrecks of the blackened and smouldering camp; while before them, gaudy and glittering pennons waving, and trumpets sounding, came the exultant legions of the foe. The Moors could scarcely believe their senses. Fondly anticipating the retreat of the Christians, after so signal a disaster, the gay and dazzling spectacle of their march to the assault filled them with consternation and alarm.

While yet wondering and inactive, the trumpet of Boabdil was heard behind; and they beheld the Moorish king, at the head of his guards, emerging down the avenues that led to the gate. The sight restored and exhilarated the gazers; and, when Boabdil halted in the space before the portals, the shout of twenty thousand warriors rolled ominously to the ears of the advancing Christians.

“Men of Granada!” said Boabdil, as soon as the deep and breathless silence had succeeded to that martial acclamation, — “the advance of the enemy is to their destruction! In the fire of last night, the hand of Allah wrote their doom. Let us forth, each and all! We will leave our homes unguarded — our hearts shall be their wall! True, that our numbers

are thinned by famine and by slaughter, but enough of us are yet left for the redemption of Granada. Nor are the dead departed from us: the dead fight with us — their souls animate our own! He who has lost a brother, becomes twice a man. On this battle we will set all. Liberty or chains! empire or exile! victory or death! Forward!”

He spoke, and gave the rein to his barb. It bounded forward, and cleared the gloomy arch of the portals, and Boabdil el Chico was the first Moor who issued from Granada, to that last and eventful field. Out, then, poured, as a river that rushes from caverns into day, the burnished and serried files of the Moorish cavalry. Muza came the last, closing the array. Upon his dark and stern countenance there spoke not the ardent enthusiasm of the sanguine king. It was locked and rigid; and the anxieties of the last dismal weeks had thinned his cheeks, and ploughed deep lines around the firm lips and iron jaw which bespoke the obstinate and unconquerable resolution of his character.

As Muza now spurred forward, and, riding along the wheeling ranks, marshalled them in order, arose the acclamation of female voices; and the warriors, who looked back at the sound, saw that their women — their wives and daughters, their mothers and their beloved, (released from their seclusion, by a policy which bespoke the desperation of the cause) — were gazing at them, with outstretched arms, from the battlements and towers. The Moors felt that they were now to fight for their hearths and altars in the presence of those who, if they failed, became slaves and har-

lots; and each Moslem felt his heart harden like the steel of his own sabre.

While the cavalry formed themselves into regular squadrons, and the tramp of the foemen came more near and near, the Moorish infantry, in miscellaneous, eager, and undisciplined bands, poured out, until, spreading wide and deep below the walls, Boabdil's charger was seen, rapidly careering amongst them, as, in short but distinct directions, or fiery adjuration, he sought at once to regulate their movements, and confirm their hot but capricious valour.

Meanwhile, the Christians had abruptly halted; and the politic Ferdinand resolved not to incur the full brunt of a whole population, in the first flush of their enthusiasm and despair. He summoned to his side Hernando del Pulgar, and bade him, with a troop of the most adventurous and practised horsemen, advance towards the Moorish cavalry, and endeavour to draw the fiery valour of Muza away from the main army. Then, splitting up his force into several sections, he dismissed each to different stations; some to storm the adjacent towers, others to fire the surrounding gardens and orchards: so that the action might consist rather of many battles than of one, and the Moors might lose the concentration and union, which made, at present, their most formidable strength.

Thus, while the Mussulmans were waiting, in order, for the attack, they suddenly beheld the main body of the Christians dispersing; and, while yet in surprise and perplexed, they saw the fires breaking out from their delicious gardens, to the right and left of the walls, and heard the boom of the Christianartil-

lery against the scattered bulwarks that guarded the approaches of that city.

At that moment, a cloud of dust rolled rapidly towards the post occupied in the van by Muza; and the shock of the Christian knights, in their mighty mail, broke upon the centre of the prince's squadron.

Higher, by several inches, than the plumage of his companions, waved the crest of the gigantic Del Pulgar; and, as Moor after Moor went down before his headlong lance, his voice, sounding deep and sepulchral through his visor, shouted out — "Death to the infidel!"

The rapid and dexterous horsemen of Granada were not, however, discomfited by this fierce assault: opening their ranks with extraordinary celerity, they suffered the charge to pass, comparatively harmless, through their centre; and then, closing in one long and bristling line, cut off the knights from retreat. The Christians wheeled round, and charged again upon their foe.

"Where art thou, O Moslem dog! that wouldst play the lion? — Where art thou, Muza Ben Abil Gazan?"

"Before thee, Christian!" cried a stern and clear voice; and, from amongst the helmets of his people, gleamed the dazzling turban of the Moor.

Hernando checked his steed, gazed a moment at his foe, turned back, for greater impetus to his charge, and, in a moment more, the bravest warriors of the two armies met, lance to lance.

The round shield of Muza received the Christian's weapon; his own spear shivered, harmless, upon the breast of the giant. He drew his sword, whirled it

rapidly over his head, and, for some minutes, the eyes of the bystanders could scarcely mark the marvellous rapidity with which strokes were given and parried, by those redoubted swordsmen.

At length, Hernando, anxious to bring to bear his superior strength, spurred close to Muza; and leaving his sword pendant by a thong to his wrist, seized the shield of Muza in his formidable grasp, and plucked it away, with a force that the Moor vainly endeavoured to resist: Muza, therefore, suddenly released his hold; and, ere the Spaniard recovered his balance (which was lost by the success of his own strength, put forth to the utmost), he dashed upon him the hoofs of his black charger, and, with a short but heavy mace; which he caught up from the saddle-bow, dealt Hernando so thundering a blow upon the helmet, that the giant fell to the ground, stunned and senseless.

To dismount, to repossess himself of his shield, to resume his sabre, to put one knee to the breast of his fallen foe, was the work of a moment; and then had Don Hernando del Pulgar been sped, without priest or surgeon, but that, alarmed by the peril of their most valiant comrade, twenty knights spurred at once to the rescue, and the points of twenty lances kept the Lion of Granada from his prey. Thither, with similar speed, rushed the Moorish champions; and the fight became close and deadly round the body of the still unconscious Christian. Not an instant of leisure to unlace the helmet of Hernando, by removing which, alone, the Moorish blade could find a mortal place, was permitted to Muza; and, what with the spears and trampling hoofs around him, the situation of the Paynim was more dangerous than that of the Christian. Meanwhile, Hernando re-

covered his dizzy senses; and, made aware of his state, watched his occasion, and suddenly shook off the knee of the Moor. With another effort he was on his feet: and the two champions stood confronting each other, neither very eager to renew the combat. But on foot, Muza, daring and rash as he was, could not but recognise his disadvantage against the enormous strength and impenetrable armour of the Christian; he drew back, whistled to his barb, that, piercing the ranks of the horsemen, was by his side on the instant, remounted, and was in the midst of the foe, almost ere the slower Spaniard was conscious of his disappearance.

But Hernando was not delivered from his enemy. Clearing a space around him, as three knights, mortally wounded, fell beneath his sabre, Muza now drew from behind his shoulder his short Arabian bow; and shaft after shaft came rattling upon the mail of the dismounted Christian with so marvellous a celerity, that, encumbered as he was with his heavy accoutrements, he was unable either to escape from the spot, or ward off that arrowy rain; and felt that nothing but chance, or our Lady, could prevent the death which one such arrow would occasion, if it should find the opening of the visor, or the joints of the hauberk.

"Mother of mercy!" groaned the knight, perplexed and enraged, "let not thy servant be shot down like a hart, by this cowardly warfare; but, if I must fall, be it with mine enemy, grappling hand to hand."

While yet muttering this short invocation, the war-cry of Spain was heard hard by, and the gallant company of Villena was seen scouring across the plain, to

the succour of their comrades. The deadly attention of Muza was distracted from individual foes, however eminent; he wheeled round, re-collected his men, and, in a serried charge, met the new enemy in midway.

While the contest thus fared in that part of the field, the scheme of Ferdinand had succeeded so far as to break up the battle into detached sections. Far and near, plain, grove, garden, tower, presented each the scene of obstinate and determined conflict. Boabdil, at the head of his chosen guard, the flower of the haughtier tribe of nobles, who were jealous of the fame and blood of the tribe of Muza, and, followed also by his gigantic Ethiopians, exposed his person to every peril, with the desperate valour of a man who feels his own stake is greatest in the field. As he most distrusted the infantry, so, amongst the infantry he chiefly bestowed his presence; and, wherever he appeared, he sufficed, for the moment, to turn the changes of the engagement. At length, at mid-day, Ponce de Leon led against the largest detachment of the Moorish foot a strong and numerous battalion of the best disciplined and veteran soldiery of Spain. He had succeeded in winning a fortress, from which his artillery could play with effect; and the troops he led were composed, partly of men flushed with recent triumph, and partly of a fresh reserve, now first brought into the field. A comely and a breathless spectacle it was, to behold this Christian squadron emerging from a blazing copse, which they fired on their march; the red light gleaming on their complete armour, as, in steady and solemn order, they swept on to the swaying and clamorous ranks of the Moorish infantry. Boabdil learned the danger from his scouts; and, hastily quitting a tower,

from which he had, for awhile, repulsed a hostile legion, he threw himself into the midst of the battalions, menaced by the skilful Ponce de Leon. Almost the same moment, the wild and ominous apparition of Almamen, long absent from the eyes of the Moors, appeared in the same quarter, so suddenly and unexpectedly, that none knew whence he had emerged; the sacred standard in his left hand — his sabre, bared and dripping gore, in his right — his face exposed, and its powerful features working with an excitement that seemed inspired: his abrupt presence breathed a new soul into the Moors.

“They come! they come!” he shrieked aloud. “The God of the East hath delivered the Goth into your hands!”

From rank to rank — from line to line — sped the santon; and, as the mystic banner gleamed before the soldiery, each closed his eyes, and muttered an amen to his adjurations.

And now, to the cry of Spain and St. Iago, came trampling down the relentless charge of the Christian war. At the same instant, from the fortress lately taken by Ponce de Leon, the artillery opened upon the Moors, and did deadly havoc. The Moslems wavered a moment, when before them gleamed the white banner of Almamen; and they beheld him rushing, alone and on foot, amidst the foe. Taught to believe the war itself depended on the preservation of the enchanted banner, the Paynims could not see it thus rashly adventured without anxiety and shame; they rallied, advanced firmly, and Boabdil himself, with waving cimier and fierce exclamations, dashed impetuously, at the head of his guards and Ethiopians, into the affray.

The battle became obstinate and bloody. Thrice the white banner disappeared amidst the closing ranks; and thrice, like a moon from the clouds, it shone forth again — the light and guide of the Pagan power.

The day ripened; and the hills already cast lengthening shadows over the blazing groves and the still Darro, whose waters, in every creek where the tide was arrested, ran red with blood, when Ferdinand, collecting his whole reserve, descended from the eminence on which hitherto he had posted himself. With him moved three thousand foot and a thousand horse, fresh in their vigour, and panting for a share in that glorious day. The king himself, who, though constitutionally fearless, from motives of policy rarely perilled his person, save on imminent occasions, was resolved not to be outdone by Boabdil; and, armed *cap-à-pie* in mail, so wrought with gold that it seemed nearly all of that costly metal, with his snow-white plumage waving above a small diadem that surmounted his lofty helm, he seemed a fit leader to that armament of heroes. Behind him flaunted the great gonfalon of Spain, and trump and cymbal heralded his approach. The Count de Tendilla rode by his side.

“Señor,” said Ferdinand, the infidels fight hard; but they are in the snare — we are about to close the nets upon them. But what cavalcade is this?”

The group that thus drew the king’s attention consisted of six squires, bearing on a martial litter, composed of shields, the stalwart form of Hernando del Pulgar.

“Ah, the dogs!” cried the king, as he recognised the pale features of the darling of the army, — “have

they murdered the bravest knight that ever fought for Christendom?"

"Not that, your majesty," quoth he of the Exploits, faintly; "but I am sorely stricken."

"It must have been more than man who struck thee down," said the king.

"It was the mace of Muza Ben Abil Gazan, an please you, sire," said one of the squires; "but it came on the good knight unawares, and long after his own arm had seemingly driven away the Pagan."

"We will avenge thee well," said the king, setting his teeth: "let our own leeches tend thy wounds. Forward, sir knights! St. Iago and Spain!"

The battle had now gathered to a vortex; Muza and his cavalry had joined Boabdil and the Moorish foot. On the other hand, Villena had been re-inforced by detachments, that, in almost every other quarter of the field, had routed the foe. The Moors had been driven back, though inch by inch; they were now in the broad space before the very walls of the city, which were still crowded with the pale and anxious faces of the aged and the women: and, at every pause in the artillery, the voices that spake of HOME were borne by that lurid air to the ears of the infidels. The shout that ran through the Christian force, as Ferdinand now joined it, struck like a death-knell upon the last hope of Boabdil. But the blood of his fierce ancestry burned in his veins, and the cheering voice of Alammen, whom nothing daunted, inspired him with a kind of superstitious frenzy.

"King against king — so be it! let Allah decide between us," cried the Moorish monarch. "Bind up this wound — 'tis well! A steed for the santón! Now,

my prophet and my friend, mount by the side of thy king — let us, at least, fall together. Lelilies! lelilies!”

Throughout the brave Christian ranks went a thrill of reluctant admiration, as they beheld the Paynim king, conspicuous by his fair beard and the jewels of his harness, lead the scanty guard yet left to him once more into the thickest of their lines. Simultaneously, Muza and his zegrís made their fiery charge; and the Moorish infantry, excited by the example of their leaders, followed with unslackened and dogged zeal. The Christians gave way, — they were beaten back: Ferdinand spurred forward; and, ere either party were well aware of it, both kings met in the same *mêlée*: all order and discipline, for the moment, lost, general and monarch were, as common soldiers, fighting hand to hand. It was then that Ferdinand, after bearing down before his lance Naim Reduon, second only to Muza in the songs of Granada, beheld opposed to him a strange form, that seemed to that royal Christian rather fiend than man: his raven hair and beard, clotted with blood, hung like snakes about a countenance, whose features, naturally formed to give expression to the darkest passions, were distorted with the madness of despairing rage. Wounded in many places, the blood dabbled his mail; while, over his head, he waved the banner wrought with mystic characters, which Ferdinand had already been taught to believe the workmanship of demons.

“Now, perjured king of the Nazarenes!” shouted this formidable champion, “we meet at last! — no longer host and guest, monarch and dervise, but man to man! I am Almamen! Die!”

He spoke; and his sword descended so fiercely on that anointed head, that Ferdinand bent to his saddle-

bow. But the king quickly recovered his seat, and gallantly met the encounter; it was one that might have tasked to the utmost the prowess of his bravest knight. Passions which, in their number, their nature, and their excess, animated no other champion on either side, gave to the arm of Almamen, the Israelite, a preternatural strength; his blows fell like rain upon the harness of the king: and the fiery eyes, the gleaming banner, of the mysterious sorcerer, who had eluded the tortures of his Inquisition, — who had walked unscathed through the midst of his army, — whose single hand had consumed the encampment of a host, filled the stout heart of the king with a belief that he encountered no earthly foe. Fortunately, perhaps, for Ferdinand and Spain, the contest did not last long. Twenty horsemen spurred into the *mêlée* to the rescue of the plumed diadem: Tendilla arrived the first; with a stroke of his two-handed sword the white banner was cleft from its staff, and fell to the earth. At that sight, the Moors around broke forth in a wild and despairing cry; that cry spread from rank to rank, from horse to foot; the Moorish infantry, sorely pressed on all sides, no sooner learned the disaster than they turned to fly: the rout was as fatal as it was sudden. The Christian reserve, just brought into the field, poured down upon them with a simultaneous charge. Boabdil, too much engaged to be the first to learn the downfall of the sacred insignia, suddenly saw himself almost alone, with his diminished Ethiopians and a handful of his cavaliers. —

“Yield thee, Boabdil el Chico!” cried Tendilla from his rear, “or thou canst not be saved.”

“By the Prophet, never!” exclaimed the king: and he dashed his barb against the wall of spears behind

him; and, with but a score or so of his guard, cut his way through the ranks, that were not unwilling, perhaps, to spare so brave a foe. As he cleared the Spanish battalions, the unfortunate monarch checked his horse for a moment, and gazed along the plain: he beheld his army flying in all directions, save in that single spot where yet glittered the turban of Muza Ben Abil Gazan. As he gazed, he heard the panting nostrils of the chargers behind, and saw the levelled spears of a company despatched to take him, alive or dead, by the command of Ferdinand: he laid the reins upon his horse's neck and galloped into the city — three lances quivered against the portals as he disappeared through the shadows of the arch. But while Muza remained, all was not yet lost: he perceived the flight of the infantry and the king, and with his followers galloped across the plain; he came in time to encounter and slay, to a man, the pursuers of Boabdil, — he then threw himself before the flying Moors:

“Do ye fly in the sight of your wives and daughters? would ye not rather they beheld ye die?”

A thousand voices answered him, — “The banner is in the hands of the infidel — all is lost!” They swept by him, and stopped not till they gained the gates.

“Accursed be these spells!” cried Muza. “Were our country our only charm, *that* never would have been lost!”

But still a small and devoted remnant of the Moorish cavaliers remained to shed a last glory over defeat itself. With Muza, their soul and centre, they fought every atom of ground: it was, as the chronicler expresses it, as if they grasped the soil with their arms. Twice

they charged into the midst of the foe: the slaughter they made doubled their own number; but, gathering on and closing in, squadron upon squadron, came the whole Christian army, — they were encompassed, wearied out, beaten back, as by an ocean. Like wild beasts, driven, at length, to their lair, they retreated with their faces to the foe; and when Muza came, the last, — his cimeter shivered to the hilt, — he had scarcely breath to command the gates to be closed and the portcullis lowered, ere he fell from his charger in a sudden and deadly swoon, caused less by his exhaustion than his agony and shame. So ended the last battle fought for the Monarchy of Granada!

CHAPTER II.

The novice.

It was in one of the cells of a convent, renowned for the piety of its inmates, and the wholesome austerity of its laws, that a young novice sat alone. The narrow casement was placed so high in the cold gray wall as to forbid to the tenant of the cell the solace of sad, or the distraction of pious, thoughts, which a view of the world without might afford. Lovely, indeed, was the landscape that spread below; but it was barred from those youthful and melancholy eyes: for Nature might tempt to a thousand thoughts, not of a tenor calculated to reconcile the heart to an eternal sacrifice of the sweet human ties. But a faint and partial gleam of sunshine broke through the aperture, and made yet more cheerless

the dreary aspect and gloomy appurtenances of the cell. And the young novice seemed to carry on within herself that struggle of emotions, without which there is no victory in the resolves of virtue: sometimes she wept bitterly; but with a low subdued sorrow, which spoke rather of despondency than passion; sometimes she raised her head from her breast, and smiled as she looked upward, or as her eyes rested on the crucifix and the death's head, that were placed on the rude table by the pallet on which she sate. They were emblems of death here, and life hereafter, which, perhaps, afforded to her the sources of a twofold consolation.

She was yet musing, when a slight tap at the door was heard, and the abbess of the convent appeared.

"Daughter," said she, "I have brought thee the comfort of a sacred visitor. The Queen of Spain, whose pious tenderness is maternally anxious for thy full contentment with thy lot, has sent hither a holy friar, whom she deems more soothing in his counsels than our brother Tomas, whose ardent zeal often terrifies those whom his honest spirit only desires to purify and guide. I will leave him with thee. May the saints bless his ministry!" So saying, the abbess retired from the threshold, making way for a form in the garb of a monk, with the hood drawn over the face. The monk bowed his head meekly, advanced into the cell, closed the door, and seated himself on a stool, which, save the table and the pallet, seemed the sole furniture of the dismal chamber.

"Daughter," said he, after a pause, "it is a rugged and a mournful lot, this renunciation of earth and all its fair destinies and soft affections, to one not wholly prepared and armed for the sacrifice. Confide in me, my child; I am no dire inquisitor, seeking to distort thy

words to thine own peril. I am no bitter and morose ascetic. Beneath these robes still beats a human heart, that can sympathise with human sorrows. Confide in me without fear. Dost thou not dread the fate they would force upon thee? Dost thou not shrink back? Wouldst thou not be free?"

"No," said the poor novice; but the denial came faint and irresolute from her lips.

"Pause," said the friar, growing more earnest in his tone: "pause — there is yet time."

"Nay," said the novice, looking up with some surprise in her countenance; "nay, even were I so weak, escape now is impossible. What hand could unbar the gates of the convent?"

"Mine!" cried the monk, with impetuosity. "Yes, I have that power. In all Spain, but one man can save thee, and I am he."

"You!" faltered the novice, gazing at her strange visitor with mingled astonishment and alarm. "And who are you, that could resist the fiat of that Tomas de Torquemada, before whom, they tell me, even the crowned heads of Castile and Arragon vail low?"

The monk half rose, with an impatient and almost haughty start, at this interrogatory; but, reseating himself, replied, in a deep and half-whispered voice: "Daughter, listen to me! It is true, that Isabel of Spain (whom the Mother of Mercy bless! for merciful to all is her secret heart, if not her outward policy) — it is true that Isabel of Spain, fearful that the path to heaven might be made rougher to thy feet than it well need be (there was a slight accent of irony in the monk's voice as he thus spoke), selected a friar of suasive eloquence and gentle manners, to visit thee. He was charged with

letters to yon abbess from the queen. Soft though the friar, he was yet a hypocrite. Nay, hear me out! he loved to worship the rising sun; and he did not wish always to remain a simple friar, while the church had higher dignities of this earth to bestow. In the Christian camp, daughter, there was one who burned for tidings of thee, — whom thine image haunted — who, stern as thou wert to him, loved thee with a love he knew not of, till thou wert lost to him. Why dost thou tremble, daughter? listen, yet! To that lover, for he was one of high birth, came the monk; to that lover the monk sold his mission. The monk will have a ready tale, that he was way-laid amidst the mountains by armed men, and robbed of his letters to the abbess. The lover took his garb, and he took the letters; and he hastened hither. Leila! beloved Leila! behold him at thy feet!"

The monk raised his cowl; and, dropping on his knee beside her, presented to her gaze the features of the Prince of Spain.

"You!" said Leila, averting her countenance, and vainly endeavouring to extricate the hand which he had seized. "This is indeed cruel. You, the author of so many sufferings — such calumny — such reproach."

"I will repair all," said Don Juan, fervently. "I alone, I repeat it, have the power to set you free. You are no longer a Jewess; you are one of our faith; there is now no bar upon our loves. Imperious though my father, — all dark and dread as is this new power which he is rashly erecting in his dominions, the heir of two monarchies is not so poor in influence and in friends, as to be unable to offer the woman of his love an inviolable shelter, alike from priest and despot. Fly with me! — quit this dreary sepulchre, ere the last stone close over thee

for ever! I have horses, I have guards at hand. This night it can be arranged. This night — oh, bliss! — thou mayest be rendered up to earth and love!”

“Prince,” said Leila, who had drawn herself from Juan’s grasp during this address, and who now stood at a little distance, erect and proud, “you tempt me in vain; or, rather, you offer me no temptation. I have made my choice; I abide by it.”

“Oh! bethink thee,” said the prince, in a voice of real and imploring anguish; “bethink thee well of the consequences of thy refusal. Thou canst not see them yet; thine ardour blinds thee. But, when hour after hour, day after day, year after year, steals on in the appalling monotony of this sanctified prison; when thou shalt see thy youth withering without love — thine age without honour; when thy heart shall grow as stone within thee, beneath the looks of yon icy spectres; when nothing shall vary the aching dulness of wasted life, save a longer fast, or a severer penance: then, then will thy grief be rendered tenfold, by the despairing and remorseful thought, that thine own lips sealed thine own sentence. Thou mayest think,” continued Juan, with rapid eagerness, “that my love to thee was, at first, light and dishonouring. Be it so. I own that my youth has passed in idle wooings, and the mockeries of affection. But, for the first time in my life, I feel that *I love*. Thy dark eyes — thy noble beauty — even thy womanly scorn, have fascinated me. I — never yet disdained where I have been a suitor — acknowledge, at last, that there is a triumph in the conquest of a woman’s heart. Oh, Leila! do not — do not reject me. You know not how rare and how deep a love you cast away.”

The novice was touched: the present language of Don Juan was so different from what it had been before; the earnest love that breathed in his voice — that looked from his eyes, struck a chord in her breast; it reminded her of her own unconquered, unconquerable love for the lost Muza. For there is that in a woman, that, when she loves one, the honest wooing of another she may reject, but cannot disdain: she feels, by her own heart, the agony his must endure; and, by a kind of egotism, pities the mirror of herself. She was touched, then — touched to tears; but her resolves were not shaken.

“Oh, Leila!” resumed the prince, fondly, mistaking the nature of her emotion, and seeking to pursue the advantage he imagined he had gained; “look at yonder sunbeam, struggling through the loophole of thy cell. Is it not a messenger from the happy world? does it not plead for me? does it not whisper to thee of the green fields, and the laughing vineyards, and all the beautiful prodigality of that earth thou art about to renounce for ever? Dost thou dread my love? Are the forms around thee, ascetic and lifeless, fairer to thine eyes than mine? Dost thou doubt my power to protect thee? I tell thee that the proudest nobles of Spain would flock around my banner, were it necessary to guard thee by force of arms. Yet, speak the word — be mine — and I will fly hence with thee, to climes where the church has not cast out its deadly roots, and, forgetful of crowns and cares, live alone for thee. Ah, speak!”

“My lord,” said Leila, calmly, and rousing herself to the necessary effort; “I am deeply and sincerely grateful for the interest you express — for the affection you avow. But you deceive yourself. I have pondered well over the alternative I have taken. I do not regret

nor repent — much less would I retract it. The earth that you speak of, full of affections and of bliss to others, has no ties, no allurements for me. I desire only peace, repose, and an early death.”

“Can it be possible,” said the prince, growing pale, “that thou lovest another? Then, indeed, and then only, would my wooing be in vain.”

The cheek of the novice grew deeply flushed, but the colour soon subsided: she murmured to herself, “Why should I blush to own it now?” and then spoke aloud: “Prince, I trust I have done with the world; and bitter the pang I feel when you call me back to it. But you merit my candour: I *have* loved another; and in that thought, as in an urn, lie the ashes of all affection. That other is of a different faith. We may never — never meet again below, but it is a solace to pray that we may meet above. That solace, and these cloisters, are dearer to me than all the pomp, all the pleasures, of the world.”

The prince sunk down, and, covering his face with his hands, groaned aloud — but made no reply.

“Go, then, Prince of Spain,” continued the novice; “son of the noble Isabel, Leila is not unworthy of her cares. Go, and pursue the great destinies that await you. And if you forgive — if you still cherish a thought of — the poor Jewish maiden, soften, alleviate, mitigate the wretched and desperate doom that awaits the fallen race she has abandoned for thy creed.”

“Alas, alas!” said the prince, mournfully, “thee alone, perchance, of all thy race, I could have saved from the bigotry that is fast covering this knightly land, like the rising of an irresistible sea — and thou re-

jectest me! Take time, at least, to pause — to consider. Let me see thee again to-morrow.”

“No, prince, no — not again! I will keep thy secret only if I see thee no more. If thou persist in a suit that I feel to be that of sin and shame, then, indeed, mine honour —”

“Hold!” interrupted Juan, with haughty impatience, — “I torment, I harass you no more. I release you from my importunity. Perhaps already I have stooped too low.” He drew the cowl over his features, and strode sullenly to the door; but, turning for one last gaze on the form that had so strangely fascinated a heart capable of generous emotions, — the meek and despondent posture of the novice, her tender youth, her gloomy fate, melted his momentary pride and resentment. “God bless and reconcile thee, poor child!” he said, in a voice choked with contending passions — and the door closed upon his form.

“I thank thee, Heaven, that it was not Muza!” muttered Leila, breaking from a reverie, in which she seemed to be communing with her own soul; “I feel that I could not have resisted *him*.” With that thought she knelt down, in humble and penitent self-reproach, and prayed for strength.

Ere she had risen from her supplications, her solitude was again invaded by Torquemada, the Dominican.

This strange man, though the author of cruelties at which nature recoils, had some veins of warm and gentle feeling, streaking, as it were, the marble of his hard character; and when he had thoroughly convinced himself of the pure and earnest zeal of the young convert, he relaxed from the grim sternness he had at first

exhibited towards her. He loved to exert the eloquence he possessed in raising her spirit, in reconciling her doubts. He prayed *for* her, and he prayed *beside* her, with passion and with tears.

He stayed long with the novice; and, when he left her, she was, if not happy, at least contented. Her warmest wish now, was to abridge the period of her noviciate, which, at her desire, the church had already rendered merely a nominal probation. She longed to put irresolution out of her power, and to enter at once upon the narrow road through the strait gate.

The gentle and modest piety of the young novice touched the sisterhood: she was endeared to all of them. Her conversion was an event that broke the lethargy of their stagnant life. She became an object of general interest, of avowed pride, of kindly compassion; and their kindness to her, who from her cradle had seen little of her own sex, had a great effect towards calming and soothing her mind. But, at night, her dreams brought before her the dark and menacing countenance of her father. Sometimes he seemed to pluck her from the gates of heaven, and to sink with her into the yawning abyss below. Sometimes she saw him with her beside the altar, but imploring her to forswear the Saviour, before whose crucifix she knelt. Occasionally her visions were haunted, also, with Muza — but in less terrible guise. She saw his calm and melancholy eyes fixed upon her; and his voice asked, “Canst thou take a vow that makes it sinful to remember me?”

The night, that usually brings balm and oblivion to the sad, was thus made more dreadful to Leila than

the day. Her health grew feebler and feebler, but her mind still was firm. In happier time and circumstance that poor novice would have been a great character; but she was one of the countless victims the world knows not of, whose virtues are in silent motives, whose struggles are in the solitary heart.

Of the prince she heard and saw no more. There were times when she fancied, from oblique and obscure hints, that the Dominican had been aware of Don Juan's disguise and visit. But, if so, that knowledge appeared only to increase the gentleness, almost the respect, which Torquemada manifested towards her. Certainly, since that day, from some cause or other, the priest's manner had been softened when he addressed her; and he who seldom had recourse to other arts than those of censure and of menace, often uttered sentiments half of pity and half of praise.

Thus consoled and supported in the day, — thus haunted and terrified by night, but still not repenting her resolve, Leila saw the time glide on to that eventful day when her lips were to pronounce that irrevocable vow which is the epitaph of life. While in this obscure and remote convent progressed the history of an individual, we are summoned back to witness the crowning fate of an expiring dynasty.

CHAPTER III.

The pause between defeat and surrender.

THE unfortunate Boabdil plunged once more amidst the recesses of the Alhambra. Whatever his anguish, or his despondency, none were permitted to share, or even to witness, his emotions. But he especially resisted the admission to his solitude, demanded by his mother, implored by his faithful Amine, and sorrowfully urged by Muza: those most loved, or most respected, were, above all, the persons from whom he most shrunk.

Almamen was heard of no more. It was believed that he had perished in the battle. But he was one of those, who, precisely as they are effective when present, are forgotten in absence. And, in the meanwhile, as the Vega was utterly desolated, and all supplies were cut off, famine, daily made more terrifically severe, diverted the attention of each humbler Moor from the fall of the city to his individual sufferings.

New persecutions fell upon the miserable Jews. Not having taken any share in the conflict (as was to be expected from men who had no stake in the country which they dwelt in, and whose brethren had been taught so severe a lesson upon the folly of interference), no sentiment of fellowship in danger mitigated the hatred and loathing with which they were held; and as, in their lust of gain, many of them continued, amidst the agony and starvation of the citizens, to sell food at enormous prices, the excitement of the multitude

against them — released, by the state of the city, from all restraint and law — made itself felt by the most barbarous excesses. Many of the houses of the Israelites were attacked by the mob, plundered, razed to the ground, and the owners tortured to death, to extort confession of imaginary wealth. Not to sell what was demanded was a crime; to sell it was a crime also. These miserable outcasts fled to whatever secret places the vaults of their houses, or the caverns in the hills within the city, could yet afford them, cursing their fate, and almost longing even for the yoke of the Christian bigots.

Thus passed several days: the defence of the city abandoned to its naked walls and mighty gates. The glaring sun looked down upon closed shops and depopulated streets, save when some ghostly and skeleton band of the famished poor, collected, in a sudden paroxysm of revenge or despair, around the stormed and fired mansion of a detested Israelite.

At length, Boabdil aroused himself from his seclusion; and Muza, to his own surprise, was summoned to the presence of the king. He found Boabdil in one of the most gorgeous halls of his gorgeous palace.

Within the Tower of Comares is a vast chamber, still called the Hall of the Ambassadors. Here it was that Boabdil now held his court. On the glowing walls hung trophies and banners, and here and there an Arabian portrait of some bearded king. By the windows, which overlooked the most lovely banks of the Darro, gathered the santons and alfaquis, a little apart from the main crowd. Beyond, through half-veiling draperies, might be seen the great court of the Alberca, whose peristyles were hung with flowers;

while, in the centre, the gigantic basin which gives its name to the court caught the sunlight obliquely, and its waves glittered on the eye from amidst the roses that then clustered over it.

In the audience-hall itself, a canopy, over the royal cushions on which Boabdil reclined, was blazoned with the heraldic insignia of Granada's monarchs. His guards, and his mutes, and his eunuchs, and his courtiers, and his counsellors, and his captains, were ranged in long files on either side the canopy. It seemed the last flicker of the lamp of the Moorish empire, that hollow and unreal pomp! As Muza approached the monarch, he was startled by the change of his countenance: the young and beautiful Boabdil seemed to have grown suddenly old; his eyes were sunken, his countenance sown with wrinkles, and his voice sounded broken and hollow on the ears of his kinsman.

"Come hither, Muza," said he; "seat thyself beside me, and listen as thou best canst to the tidings we are about to hear."

As Muza placed himself on a cushion, a little below the king, Boabdil motioned to one amongst the crowd.

"Hamet," said he, "thou hast examined the state of the Christian camp: what news dost thou bring?"

"Light of the Faithful," answered the Moor, "it is a camp no longer—it has already become a city. Nine towns of Spain were charged with the task: stone has taken the place of canvass; towers and streets arise like the buildings of a genius; and the misbelieving king hath sworn that this new city shall not be left until Granada sees his standard on its walls."

"Go on," said Boabdil, calmly.

“Traders and men of merchandise flock thither daily; the spot is one bazaar; all that should supply our famishing country pours its plenty into their mart.”

Boabdil motioned to the Moor to withdraw, and an alfaqui advanced in his stead.

“Successor of the Prophet, and darling of the world!” said the reverend man, “the alfaquis and seers of Granada implore thee on their knees to listen to their voice. They have consulted the Books of Fate; they have implored a sign from the Prophet; and they find that the glory has left thy people and thy crown. The fall of Granada is predestined — God is great!”

“You shall have my answer forthwith,” said Boabdil. “Abdelemic, approach.”

From the crowd came an aged and white-bearded man, the governor of the city.

“Speak, old man,” said the king.

“Oh, Boabdil!” said the veteran, with faltering tones, while the tears rolled down his cheeks; “son of a race of kings and heroes! would that thy servant had fallen dead on thy threshold this day, and that the lips of a Moorish noble had never been polluted by the words that I now utter. Our state is hopeless: our granaries are as the sands of the deserts; there is in them life neither for beast nor man. The war-horse that bore the hero is now consumed for his food; and the population of thy city, with one voice, cry for chains and — bread! I have spoken.”

“Admit the ambassador of Egypt,” said Boabdil, as Abdelemic retired. There was a pause: one of the draperies at the end of the hall was drawn aside; and with the slow and sedate majesty of their tribe and land, paced forth a dark and swarthy train, the envoys

of the Egyptian soldan. Six of the band bore costly presents of gems and weapons, and the procession closed with four veiled slaves, whose beauty had been the boast of the ancient valley of the Nile.

"Sun of Granada and day-star of the faithful!" said the chief of the Egyptians, "my lord, the Soldan of Egypt, delight of the world, and rose-tree of the East, thus answers to the letters of Boabdil. He grieves that he cannot send the succour thou demandest, and, informing himself of the condition of thy territories, he finds that Granada no longer holds a seaport, by which his forces (could he send them,) might find an entrance into Spain. He implores thee to put thy trust in Allah, who will not desert his chosen ones, and lays these gifts, in pledge of amity and love, at the feet of my lord the king."

"It is a gracious and well-timed offering," said Boabdil, with a writhing lip; "we thank him." There was now a long and dead silence, as the ambassadors swept from the hall of audience; when Boabdil suddenly raised his head from his breast, and looked around his hall with a kingly and majestic look: "Let the heralds of Ferdinand of Spain approach."

A groan involuntarily broke from the breast of Muza: it was echoed by a murmur of abhorrence and despair from the gallant captains who stood around; but to that momentary burst succeeded a breathless silence, as from another drapery, opposite the royal couch, gleamed the burnished mail of the knights of Spain. Foremost of those haughty visitors, whose iron heels clanked loudly on the tessellated floor, came a noble and stately form, in full armour, save the helmet, and with a mantle of azure velvet, wrought with the

silver cross that made the badge of the Christian war. Upon his manly countenance was visible no sign of undue arrogance or exultation; but something of that generous pity which brave men feel for conquered foes, dimmed the lustre of his commanding eye, and softened the wonted sternness of his martial bearing. He and his train approached the king with a profound salutation of respect; and, falling back, motioned to the herald that accompanied him, and whose garb — breast and back — was wrought with the arms of Spain, to deliver himself of his mission.

“To Boabdil!” said the herald, with a loud voice, that filled the whole expanse, and thrilled with various emotions the dumb assembly. “To Boabdil el Chico, king of Granada, Ferdinand of Arragon and Isabel of Castile send royal greeting. They command me to express their hope, that the war is at length concluded; and they offer to the King of Granada such terms of capitulation, as a king, without dishonour, may receive. In the stead of this city, which their Most Christian Majesties will restore to their own dominion, as is just, they offer, O king, princely territories in the Alpuxarras mountains to your sway; holding them by oath of fealty to the Spanish crown. To the people of Granada, their Most Christian Majesties promise full protection of property, life, and faith, under a government by their own magistrates, and according to their own laws; exemption from tribute for three years; and taxes thereafter, regulated by the custom and ratio of their present imposts. To such Moors as, discontented with these provisions, would abandon Granada, are promised free passage for themselves and their wealth. In return for these marks of

their royal bounty, their Most Christian Majesties summon Granada to surrender (if no succour meanwhile arrive) within seventy days. And these offers are now solemnly recorded in the presence, and through the mission, of the noble and renowned knight, Gonzalvo of Cordova, deputed by their Most Christian Majesties from their new city of Santa Fè."

When the herald had concluded, Boabdil cast his eye over his thronged and splendid court. No glance of fire met his own; amidst the silent crowd, a resigned content was alone to be perceived: the proposals exceeded the hope of the besieged.

"And," asked Boabdil, with a deep-drawn sigh, "if we reject these offers?"

"Noble prince," said Gonzalvo, earnestly, "ask us not to wound thine ears with the alternative. Pause, and consider of our offers; and, if thou doubtest, O brave king! mount the towers of thine Alhambra, survey our legions marshalled beneath thy walls, and turn thine eyes upon a brave people, defeated, not by human valour, but by famine, and the inscrutable will of God."

"Your monarchs shall have our answer, gentle Christian, perchance ere nightfall. And you, Sir knight, who hast delivered a message bitter for kings to hear, receive, at least, our thanks for such bearing as might best mitigate the import. Our vizier will bear to your apartment those tokens of remembrance that are yet left to the monarch of Granada to bestow."

"Muza," resumed the king, as the Spaniards left the presence, — "thou hast heard all. What is the last counsel thou canst give thy sovereign?"

The fierce Moor had with difficulty waited this license to utter such sentiments as death only could banish from that unconquerable heart. He rose, descended from the couch, and, standing a little below the king, and facing the motley throng of all of wise or brave yet left to Granada, thus spoke: —

“Why should we surrender? two hundred thousand inhabitants are yet within our walls; of these, twenty thousand, at least, are Moors, who have hands and swords. Why should we surrender? Famine presses us, it is true; but hunger, that makes the lion more terrible, shall it make the man more base? Do ye despair? so be it: despair, in the valiant, ought to have an irresistible force. Despair has made cowards brave: shall it sink the brave to cowards? Let us arouse the people; hitherto we have depended too much upon the nobles. Let us collect our whole force, and march upon this new city, while the soldiers of Spain are employed in their new profession of architects and builders. Hear me, O God and Prophet of the Moslem! hear one who never was forsworn! If, Moors of Granada, ye adopt my counsel, I cannot promise ye victory, but I promise ye never to live without it: I promise ye, at least, your independence — for the dead know no chains! Let us die, if we cannot live, so that we may leave, to remotest ages, a glory that shall be more durable than kingdoms. King of Granada! this is the counsel of Muza Ben Abil Gazan.”

The prince ceased. But he, whose faintest word had once breathed fire into the dullest, had now poured out his spirit upon frigid and lifeless matter. No man answered — no man moved.

Boabdil alone, clinging to the shadow of hope, turned at last towards the audience.

“Warriors and sages!” he said, “as Muza’s counsel is your king’s desire, say but the word, and, ere the hour-glass shed its last sand, the blast of our trumpet shall be ringing through the Vivarrambla.”

“O king! fight not against the will of fate — God is great!” replied the chief of the alfaquis.

“Alas!” said Abdelmelic, “if the voice of Muza and your own fall thus coldly upon us, how can ye stir the breadless and heartless multitude?”

“Is such your general thought, and your general will?” said Boabdil.

An universal murmur answered, “Yes!”

“Go then, Abdelmelic,” resumed the ill-starred king, “go with yon Spaniards to the Christian camp, and bring us back the best terms you can obtain. The crown has passed from the head of El Zogoybi; Fate sets her seal upon my brow. Unfortunate was the commencement of my reign — unfortunate its end. Break up the divan.”

The words of Boabdil moved and penetrated an audience, never till then so alive to his gentle qualities, his learned wisdom, and his natural valour. Many flung themselves at his feet, with tears and sighs; and the crowd gathered round, to touch the hem of his robe.

Muza gazed at them in deep disdain, with folded arms and heaving breast.

“Women, not men!” he exclaimed, “ye weep, as if ye had not blood still left to shed! Ye are reconciled to the loss of liberty, because ye are told ye shall lose nothing else. Fools and dupes! I see, from the spot where my spirit stands above ye, the dark and dismal

future to which ye are crawling on your knees: bondage and rapine — the violence of lawless lust — the persecution of hostile faith — your gold wrung from ye by torture — your national name rooted from the soil. Bear this, and remember me! Farewell, Boabdil! you I pity not; for your gardens have yet a poison, and your armouries a sword. Farewell, nobles and santons of Granada! I quit my country while it is yet free.”

Scarcely had he ceased ere he had disappeared from the hall. It was as the parting genius of Granada!

CHAPTER IV.

The adventure of the solitary horseman.

It was a burning and sultry noon, when, through a small valley, skirted by rugged and precipitous hills, at the distance of several leagues from Granada, a horseman, in complete armour, wound his solitary way. His mail was black and unadorned; on his vizor waved no plume. But there was something in his carriage and mien, and the singular beauty of his coal-black steed, which appeared to indicate of higher rank than the absence of page and squire, and the plainness of his accoutrements, would have denoted to a careless eye. He rode very slowly; and his steed, with the license of a spoiled favourite, often halted lazily in his sultry path, as a tuft of herbage, or the bough of some overhanging tree, offered its temptation. At length, as he thus paused, a noise was heard in a copse that clothed the descent of a steep mountain; and

the horse started suddenly back, forcing the traveller from his reverie. He looked mechanically upward, and beheld the figure of a man bounding through the trees, with rapid and irregular steps. It was a form that suited well the silence and solitude of the spot; and might have passed for one of those stern recluses — half hermit, half soldier — who, in the earlier crusades, fixed their wild homes amidst the sands and caves of Palestine. The stranger supported his steps by a long staff. His hair and beard hung long and matted over his broad shoulders. A rusted mail, once splendid with arabesque enrichments, protected his breast; but the loose gown — a sort of tartan, which descended below the cuirass — was rent and tattered, and his feet bare; in his girdle was a short curved cimeter, a knife or dagger, and a parchment roll, clasped and bound with iron.

As the horseman gazed at this abrupt intruder on the solitude, his frame quivered with emotion; and, raising himself to his full height, he called aloud, "Fiend or santon — whatsoever thou art — what seekest thou in these lonely places, far from the king thy counsels deluded, and the city betrayed by thy false prophecies and unhallowed charms?"

"Ha!" cried Almamen, for it was indeed the Israelite; "by thy black charger, and the tone of thy haughty voice, I know the hero of Granada. Rather, Muza Ben Abil Gazan, why art thou absent from the last hold of the Moorish empire?"

"Dost thou pretend to read the future, and art thou blind to the present? Granada has capitulated to the Spaniard. Alone I have left a land of slaves,

and shall seek, in our ancestral Africa, some spot where the footstep of the misbeliever hath not trodden."

"The fate of one bigotry is, then, sealed," said Almamen, gloomily; "but that which succeeds it is yet more dark."

"Dog!" cried Muza, couching his lance, "what art thou, that thus blasphemest?"

"A Jew!" replied Almamen, in a voice of thunder, and drawing his cimiter: "a despised and despising Jew! Ask you more? I am the son of a race of kings. I was the worst enemy of the Moors, till I found the Nazarene more hateful than the Moslem; and then even Muza himself was not their more renowned champion. Come on, if thou wilt, man to man: I defy thee!"

"No, no," muttered Muza, sinking his lance! "thy mail is rusted with the blood of the Spaniard, and this arm cannot smite the slayer of the Christian. Part we in peace."

"Hold, prince!" said Almamen, in an altered voice: "is thy country the sole thing dear to thee? Has the smile of woman never stole beneath thine armour? Has thy heart never beat for softer meetings than the encounter of a foe?"

"Am I human, and a Moor?" returned Muza. "For once you divine aright; and, could thy spells bestow on these eyes but one more sight of the last thing left to me on earth, I should be as credulous of thy sorcery as Boabdil."

"Thou lovest her still, then — this Leila?"

"Dark necromancer, hast thou read my secret? and knowest thou the name of my beloved one? Ah! let me believe thee indeed wise, and reveal to me the

spot of earth which holds the treasure of my soul! Yes," continued the Moor, with increased emotion, and throwing up his vizor, as if for air — "yes, Allah forgive me! but, when all was lost at Granada, I had still one consolation in leaving my fated birth-place: I had license to search for Leila; I had the hope to secure to my wanderings in distant lands one to whose glance the eyes of the houris would be dim. But I waste words. Tell me where is Leila, and conduct me to her feet."

"Moslem, I will lead thee to her," answered Almamen, gazing on the prince with an expression of strange and fearful exultation in his dark eyes: "I will lead thee to her — follow me. It is only yesternight that I learned the walls that confined her; and from that hour to this have I journeyed over mountain and desert, without rest or food."

"Yet what is she to thee?" asked Muza, suspiciously.

"Thou shalt learn full soon. Let us on."

So saying, Almamen sprung forward with a vigour which the excitement of his mind supplied to the exhaustion of his body. Muza wonderingly pushed on his charger, and endeavoured to draw his mysterious guide into conversation: but Almamen scarcely heeded him. His long fast, his solitary travels, his anxieties, his vicissitudes, and — more than all — his own fiery and consuming passions, were fast ripening into confirmed frenzy the half delirious emotions which had for months marred the natural keenness of his intellect; and, when he broke from his gloomy silence, it was but in incoherent and brief exclamations, often in a tongue foreign to the ear of his companion. The hardy

Moor, though steeled against the superstitions of his race, less by the philosophy of the learned than the contempt of the brave, felt an awe gather over him as he glanced, from time to time, from the giant rocks and lonely valleys, to the unearthly aspect and glittering eyes of the reputed sorcerer; and more than once he muttered such verses of the Koran as he remembered, and were esteemed by his countrymen the counterspell of the machinations of the evil genii.

It might be an hour that they had thus journeyed together, when Almamen paused abruptly. "I am wearied," said he, faintly; "and, though time presses, I fear that my strength will fail me."

"Mount, then, behind me," returned the Moor, after some natural hesitation: "Jew though thou art, I will brave the contamination for the sake of Leila."

"Moor!" cried the Hebrew, fiercely, "the contamination would be mine. Things of the yesterday, as thy prophet and thy creed are, thou canst not sound the unfathomable loathing, which each heart, faithful to the Ancient of Days, feels for such as thou and thine."

"Now, by the Kaaba!" said Muza, and his brow became dark, "another such word, and the hoofs of my steed shall trample the breath of blasphemy from thy body."

"I would defy thee to the death," answered Almamen, disdainfully; "but I reserve the bravest of the Moors to witness a deed worthy of the descendant of Jephtha. But, hist! I hear hoofs."

Muza listened; and, at a distance beyond them, his sharp ear caught a distinct ring upon the hard and rocky soil. He turned round, and saw Almamen gliding away through the thick underwood, until the

branches concealed his form. Presently, a curve in the path brought in view a Spanish cavalier, mounted on an Andalusian jennet: the horseman was gaily singing one of the popular ballads of the time; and, as it related to the feats of the Spaniards against the Moors, Muza's haughty blood was already stirred, and his moustache quivered on his lip. "I will change the air," muttered the Moslem, grasping his lance; when, as the thought crossed him, he beheld the Spaniard suddenly reel in his saddle, and fall prostrate on the ground. In the same instant Almamen had darted from his hiding-place, seized the steed of the cavalier, mounted, and, ere Muza recovered from his surprise, was by the side of the Moor.

"By what charm," said Muza, curbing his barb, "didst thou fell the Spaniard — seemingly without a blow?"

"As David felled Goliath — by the pebble and the sling," answered Almamen, carelessly. "Now, then, spur forward, if thou art eager to see thy Leila."

The horsemen dashed over the body of the stunned and insensible Spaniard. Tree and mountain glided by; gradually the valley vanished, and a thick forest gloomed upon their path. Still they made on, though the interlaced boughs, and the ruggedness of the footing, somewhat obstructed their way; until, as the sun began slowly to decline, they entered a broad and circular space, round which trees of the eldest growth spread their motionless and shadowy boughs. In the midmost sward was a rude and antique stone, resembling the altar of some barbarous and departed creed. Here Almamen abruptly halted, and muttered inaudibly to himself.

“What moves thee, dark stranger?” said the Moor; “and why dost thou mutter, and gaze on space?”

Almamen answered not, but dismounted, hung his bridle to a branch of a scathed and riven elm, and advanced alone into the middle of the space. “Dread and prophetic power that art within me!” said the Hebrew, aloud, — “this, then, is the spot that, by dream and vision, thou hast foretold me wherein to consummate and record the vow that shall sever from the spirit the last weakness of the flesh. Night after night hast thou brought before mine eyes, in darkness and in slumber, the solemn solitude that I now survey. Be it so: I am prepared!”

Thus speaking, he retired for a few moments into the wood; collected in his arms the dry leaves and withered branches which cumbered the desolate clay; and placed the fuel upon the altar. Then, turning to the East, and raising his hands on high, he exclaimed, “Lo! upon this altar, once worshipped, perchance, by the heathen savage, the last bold spirit of thy fallen and scattered race dedicates, O Ineffable One! that precious offering thou didst demand from a sire of old. Accept the sacrifice!”

As the Hebrew ended his adjuration, he drew a vial from his bosom, and sprinkled a few drops upon the arid fuel. A pale blue flame suddenly leaped up; and, as it lighted the haggard but earnest countenance of the Israelite, Muza felt his Moorish blood congeal in his veins, and shuddered, through he scarce knew why. Almamen, then, with his dagger, severed from his head one of his long locks, and cast it upon the flame. He watched it till it was consumed; and then, with a stifled cry, fell upon the earth in a dead swoon

The Moor hastened to raise him; he chafed his hands and temples; he unbuckled the vest upon his bosom: he forgot that his comrade was a sorcerer and a Jew, so much had the agony of that excitement moved his sympathy.

It was not till several minutes had elapsed, that Almamen, with a deep-drawn sigh, recovered from his swoon. "Ah, beloved one! bride of my heart!" he murmured, "was it for this that thou didst commend to me the only pledge of our youthful love? Forgive me! I restore her to the earth, untainted by the Gentile." He closed his eyes again, and a strong convulsion shook his frame. It passed; and he rose as a man from a fearful dream, composed, and almost, as it were, refreshed, by the terrors he had undergone. The last glimmer of the ghastly light was dying away upon that ancient altar, and a low wind crept sighing through the trees.

"Mount, prince," said Almamen, calmly, but averting his eyes from the altar; "we shall have no more delays."

"Wilt thou not explain thy incantation?" asked Muza; "or is it, as my reason tells me, but the mum-mery of a juggler?"

"Alas! alas!" answered Almamen, in a sad and altered tone, "thou wilt soon know all."

CHAPTER V.

The sacrifice.

THE sun was now sinking slowly through those masses of purple cloud which belong to Iberian skies; when, emerging from the forest, the travellers saw before them a small and lovely plain, cultivated like a garden. Rows of orange and citron trees were backed by the dark green foliage of vines; and these, again, found a barrier in girdling copses of chestnut, oak, and the deeper verdure of pines: while, far to the horizon, rose the distant and dim outline of the mountain range, scarcely distinguishable from the mellow colourings of the heaven. Through this charming spot went a slender and sparkling torrent, that collected its waters in a circular basin, over which the rose and orange hung their contrasted blossoms. On a gentle eminence, above this plain or garden, rose the spires of a convent: and, though it was still clear daylight, the long and pointed lattices were illumined within; and, as the horsemen cast their eyes upon the pile, the sound of the holy chorus — made more sweet and solemn from its own indistinctness, from the quiet of the hour, from the sudden and sequestered loveliness of that spot, suiting so well the ideal calm of the conventual life — rolled its music through the odorous and lucent air.

But that scene and that sound, so calculated to soothe and harmonise the thoughts, seemed to arouse

Almamen into agony and passion. He smote his breast with his clenched hand; and, shrieking, rather than exclaiming, "God of my fathers! have I come too late?" buried his spurs to the rowels in the sides of his panting steed. Along the sward, through the fragrant shrubs, athwart the pebbly and shallow torrent, up the ascent to the convent, sped the Israelite. Muza, wondering and half reluctant, followed at a little distance. Clearer and nearer came the voices of the choir; broader and redder glowed the tapers from the Gothic casements: the porch of the convent chapel was reached; the Hebrew sprang from his horse. A small group of the peasants dependent on the convent loitered reverently round the threshold: pushing through them, as one frantic, Almamen entered the chapel, and disappeared.

A minute elapsed. Muza was at the door; but the Moor paused irresolutely ere he dismounted. "What is the ceremony?" he asked of the peasants.

"A nun is about to take the vows," answered one of them.

A cry of alarm, of indignation, of terror, was heard within. Muza no longer delayed: he gave his steed to the bystander, pushed aside the heavy curtain that screened the threshold, and was within the chapel.

By the altar gathered a confused and disordered group — the sisterhood, with their abbess. Round the consecrated rail flocked the spectators, breathless and amazed. Conspicuous above the rest, on the elevation of the holy place, stood Almamen, with his drawn dagger in his right hand, his left arm clasped around the form of a novice, whose dress, not yet replaced by the serge, bespoke her the sister fated to the veil: and, on the opposite side of that sister, one hand on her

shoulder, the other rearing on high the sacred crucifix, stood a stern, calm, commanding form, in the white robes of the Dominican order: it was Tomas de Torquemada.

“Avaunt, Abaddon!” were the first words which reached Muza’s ear, as he stood, unnoticed, in the middle of the aisle: “here thy sorcery and thine arts cannot avail thee. Release the devoted one of God!”

“She is mine! she is my daughter! I claim her from thee as a father, in the name of the great Sire of Man!”

“Seize the sorcerer! seize him!” exclaimed the inquisitor, as, with a sudden movement, Almamen cleared his way through the scattered and dismayed group, and stood, with his daughter in his arms, on the first step of the consecrated platform.

But not a foot stirred — not a hand was raised. The epithet bestowed on the intruder had only breathed a supernatural terror into the audience; and they would have sooner rushed upon a tiger in his lair, than on the lifted dagger and savage aspect of that grim stranger.

“Oh, my father!” then said a low and faltering voice, that startled Muza as a voice from the grave — “wrestle not against the decrees of Heaven. Thy daughter is not compelled to her solemn choice. Humbly, but devotedly, a convert to the Christian creed, her only wish on earth is to take the consecrated and eternal vow.”

“Ha!” groaned the Hebrew, suddenly relaxing his hold, as his daughter fell on her knees before him, “then have I indeed been told, as I have foreseen, the worst. The veil is rent — the spirit hath left the temple. Thy beauty is desecrated; thy form is but unhallowed

clay. Dog!" he cried, more fiercely, glaring round upon the unmoved face of the inquisitor, "this is thy work: but thou shalt not triumph. Here, by thine own shrine, I spit at and defy thee, as once before, amidst the tortures of thy inhuman court. Thus — thus — thus — Almamen the Jew delivers the last of his house from the curse of Galilee!"

"Hold, murderer!" cried a voice of thunder; and an armed man burst through the crowd, and stood upon the platform. It was too late: thrice the blade of the Hebrew had passed through that innocent breast; thrice was it reddened with that virgin blood. Leila fell in the arms of her lover; her dim eyes rested upon his countenance, as it shone upon her, beneath his lifted visor — a faint and tender smile played upon her lips — Leila was no more.

One hasty glance Almamen cast upon his victim, and then, with a wild laugh, that woke every echo in the dreary aisles, he leaped from the place. Brandishing his bloody weapon above his head, he dashed through the cowering crowd; and, ere even the startled Dominican had found a voice, the tramp of his headlong steed rang upon the air: an instant — and all was silent.

But over that murdered girl leaned the Moor, as yet incredulous of her death; her head, still unshorn of its purple tresses, pillowed on his lap — her icy hand clasped in his, and her blood weltering fast over his armour. None disturbed him; for, habited as the knights of Christendom, none suspected his faith; and all, even the Dominican, felt a thrill of sympathy at his distress. With the quickness of comprehension common to those climes, they understood at once that it was a lover who

sustained that beautiful clay. How he came hither, with what object — what hope, their thoughts were too much locked in pity to conjecture. There, voiceless and motionless, bent the Moor; until one of the monks approached and felt the pulse, to ascertain if life was, indeed, utterly gone.

The Moor, at first, waved him haughtily away; but, when he divined the monk's purpose, suffered him in silence to take the beloved hand. He fixed on him his dark and imploring eyes; and, when the father dropped the hand, and, gently shaking his head, turned away, a deep and agonising groan was all that the audience heard from that heart in which the last iron of fate had entered. Passionately he kissed the brow, the cheeks, the lips, of the hushed and angel face — and rose from the spot.

"What dost thou here? and what knowest thou of yon murderous enemy of God and man?" asked the Dominican, approaching.

Muza made no reply, as he stalked slowly through the chapel. The audience was touched to sudden tears. "Forbear!" said they, almost with one accord, to the harsh inquisitor; "he hath no voice to answer thee."

And thus, amidst the oppressive grief and sympathy of the Christian throng, the unknown Paynim reached the door; mounted his steed; and, as he turned once more, and cast a hurried glance upon the fatal pile, the bystanders saw the large tears rolling down his swarthy cheeks.

Slowly that coal-black charger wound down the hillock — crossed the quiet and lovely garden, and vanished amidst the forest. And never was known, to Moor or Christian, the future fate of the hero of Granada.

Whether he reached in safety the shores of his ancestral Africa, and carved out new fortunes and a new name; or whether death, by disease or strife, terminated obscurely his glorious and brief career; mystery — deep and unpenetrated, even by the fancies of the thousand bards who have consecrated his deeds — wraps in everlasting shadow the destinies of Muza Ben Abil Gazan, from that hour, when the setting sun threw its parting ray over his stately form and his ebon barb, disappearing amidst the breathless shadows of the forest.

CHAPTER VI.

The return — the riot — the treachery — and the death.

It was the eve of the fatal day on which Granada was to be delivered to the Spaniards, and in that subterranean vault beneath the house of Almamen, before described, three elders of the Jewish persuasion were met.

“Trusty and well-beloved Ximen,” cried one — a wealthy and usurious merchant, with a twinkling and humid eye, and a sleek and unctuous aspect, which did not, however, suffice to disguise something fierce and crafty in his low brow and pinched lips: “trusty and well-beloved Ximen,” said this Jew, “truly, thou hast served us well, in yielding to thy persecuted brethren this secret shelter. Here, indeed, may the heathen search for us in vain. Verily, my veins grow warm again; and thy servant hungereth, and hath thirst.”

"Eat, Isaac, eat; yonder are viands prepared for thee; eat, and spare not. And thou, Elias — wilt thou not draw near the board? The wine is old and precious, and will revive thee."

"Ashes and hyssop — hyssop and ashes, are food and drink for me!" answered Elias, with passionate bitterness; "they have rased my house — they have burned my granaries — they have molten down my gold. I am a ruined man!"

"Nay," said Ximen, "who gazed at him with a malevolent eye (for so utterly had years and sorrows mixed with gall even the one kindlier sympathy he possessed, that he could not resist an inward chuckle over the very afflictions he relieved, and the very impotence he protected) — "nay, Elias; thou hast wealth yet left in the seaport towns, sufficient to buy up half Granada."

"The Nazarene will seize it all!" cried Elias; "I see it already in his grasp!"

"Nay, thinkest thou so? — and wherefore?" asked Ximen, startled into sincere, because selfish anxiety.

"Mark me! Under license of the truce, I went, last night, to the Christian camp — I had an interview with the Christian king; and when he heard my name and faith, his very beard curled with ire. 'Hound of Belial!' he roared forth, 'has not thy comrade carrion, the sorcerer Almamen, sufficiently deceived and insulted the majesty of Spain? For his sake ye shall have no quarter. Tarry here another instant, and thy corpse shall be swinging to the winds! Go, and count over thy misgotten wealth: just census shall he taken of it; and, if thou defraudest our holy impost by one piece of copper, thou shalt sup with Dives!' Such was my mission,

and mine answer. I return home to see the ashes of mine house! Wo is me!"

"And this we owe to Almamen, the pretended Jew!" cried Isaac, from his solitary, but not idle, place at the board.

"I would this knife were at his false throat!" growled Elias, clutching his poniard with his long bony fingers.

"No chance of that," muttered Ximen; "he will return no more to Granada. The vulture and the worm have divided his carcass between them ere this; and (he added inly, with a hideous smile) his house and his gold have fallen into the hands of old, childless Ximen."

"This is a strange and fearful vault," said Isaac, quaffing a large goblet of the hot wine of the Vega; "here might the witch of Endor have raised the dead. Yon door — whither doth it lead?"

"Through passages none, that I know of, save my master, hath trodden," answered Ximen. "I have heard that they reach even to the Alhambra. Come, worthy Elias! thy form trembles with the cold, — take this wine."

"Hist!" said Elias, shaking from limb to limb: "Our pursuers are upon us — I hear a step!"

As he spoke, the door to which Isaac had pointed, slowly opened, and Almamen entered the vault.

Had, indeed, a new witch of Endor conjured up the dead, the apparition would not more have startled and appalled that goodly trio. Elias, griping his knife, retreated to the farthest end of the vault. Isaac dropped the goblet he was about to drain, and fell upon his knees. Ximen, alone — growing, if possible, a shade more ghastly — retained something of self-possession, as he

muttered to himself, — “He lives! and his gold is not mine! Curse him!”

Seemingly unconscious of the strange guests his sanctuary shrouded, Almamen stalked on, like a man walking in his sleep.

Ximen roused himself — softly unbarred the door which admitted to the upper apartments, and motioned to his comrades to avail themselves of the opening: but, as Isaac, — the first to accept the hint — crept across, Almamen fixed upon him his terrible eye; and, appearing suddenly to awake to consciousness, shouted out, “Thou miscreant, Ximen! whom hast thou admitted to the secrets of thy lord? Close the door — these men must die!”

“Mighty master!” said Ximen, calmly, “is thy servant to blame, that he believed the rumour that declared thy death? These men are of our holy faith, whom I have snatched from the violence of the sacrilegious and maddened mob. No spot but this seemed safe from the popular frenzy.”

“Are ye Jews?” said Almamen. “Ah, yes! I know ye now — things of the market-place and bazaar! Oh, ye are Jews, indeed! Go, go! — Leave me!”

Waiting no further license, the three vanished; but, ere he quitted the vault, Elias turned back his scowling countenance on Almamen, who had sunk again into an absorbed meditation, with a glance of vindictive ire — Almamen was alone.

In less than a quarter of an hour Ximen returned, to seek his master; but the place was again deserted.

It was midnight in the streets of Granada — midnight, but not repose. The multitude, roused into one of their paroxysms of wrath and sorrow, by the reflection

that the morrow was indeed the day of their subjection to the Christian foe, poured forth through the streets to the number of twenty thousand. It was a wild and stormy night; those formidable gusts of wind, which sometimes sweep in sudden winter from the snows of the Sierra Nevada, howled through the tossing groves, and along the winding streets. But the tempest seemed to heighten, as if by the sympathy of the elements, the popular storm and whirlwind. Brandishing arms and torches, and gaunt with hunger, the dark forms of the frantic Moors seemed like ghouls, or spectres, rather than mortal men; as, apparently without an object, save that of venting their own disquietude, or exciting the fears of earth, they swept through the desolate city.

In the broad space of the Vivarrambla, the crowd halted; irresolute in all else, but resolved, at least, that something for Granada should yet be done. They were, for the most, armed in their Moorish fashion; but they were wholly without leaders: not a noble, a magistrate, an officer, would have dreamed of the hopeless enterprise of violating the truce with Ferdinand. It was a mere popular tumult — the madness of a mob; — but not the less formidable, for it was an eastern mob, and a mob with swords and shafts, with buckler and mail — the mob by which oriental empires have been built and overthrown! There, in the splendid space that had witnessed the games and tournaments of that Arab and African chivalry — there, where, for many a lustrum, kings had reviewed devoted and conquering armies — assembled these desperate men; the loud winds agitating their tossing torches, that struggled against the moonless night.

"Let us storm the Alhambra!" cried one of the band: "let us seize Boabdil, and place him in the midst of us, let us rush against the Christians, buried in their proud repose!"

"Lelilies, Lelilies! — the Keys and the Crescent!" shouted the mob.

The shout died: and, at the verge of the space, was suddenly heard a once familiar, and ever thrilling voice.

The Moors, who heard it, turned round in amaze and awe; and beheld, raised upon the stone upon which the criers or heralds had been wont to utter the royal proclamations, the form of Almamen, the santón, whom they had deemed already with the dead.

"Moors, and people of Granada!" he said, in a solemn, but hollow voice, "I am with ye still. Your monarch and your heroes have deserted ye, but I am with ye to the last! Go not to the Alhambra: the fort is impenetrable — the guard, faithful. Night will be wasted, and day bring upon you the Christian army. March to the gates; pour along the Vega; descend at once upon the the foe!"

He spoke, and drew forth his sabre; it gleamed in the torch-light — the Moors bowed their heads in fanatic reverence — the santón sprang from the stone, and passed into the centre of the crowd.

Then, once more arose joyful shouts. The multitude had found a leader worthy of their enthusiasm; and in regular order, they formed themselves rapidly, and swept down the narrow streets.

Swelled by several scattered groups of desultory marauders (the ruffians and refuse of the city), the infidel numbers were now but a few furlongs from the great

gate, whence they had been wont to issue on the foe. And then, perhaps, had the Moors passed these gates, and reached the Christian encampment, lulled, as it was, in security and sleep, that wild army of twenty thousand desperate men might have saved Granada; and Spain might, at this day, possess the only civilised empire which the faith of Mahomet ever founded.

But the evil star of Boabdil prevailed. The news of the insurrection in the city reached him. Two aged men, from the lower city, arrived at the Alhambra — demanded and obtained an audience; and the effect of that interview was instantaneous upon Boabdil. In the popular frenzy he saw only a justifiable excuse for the Christian king to break the conditions of the treaty, rase the city, and exterminate the inhabitants. Touched by a generous compassion for his subjects, and actuated no less by a high sense of kingly honour, which led him to preserve a truce solemnly sworn to, he once more mounted his cream-coloured charger, with the two elders who had sought him by his side; and, at the head of his guard, rode from the Alhambra. The sound of his trumpets, the tramp of his steeds, the voice of his heralds, simultaneously reached the multitude; and, ere they had leisure to decide their course, the king was in the midst of them.

“What madness is this, O my people?” cried Boabdil, spurring into the midst of the throng, — “whither would ye go?”

“Against the Christian! — against the Goth!” shouted a thousand voices. “Lead us on! The santón is risen from the dead, and will ride by thy right hand!”

“Alas!” resumed the king, “ye would march against the Christian king! Remember that our hostages are

in his power; remember that he will desire no better excuse to level Granada with the dust, and put you and your children to the sword. We have made such treaty as never yet was made between foe and foe. Your lives, laws, wealth — all are saved. Nothing is lost, save the crown of Boabdil. I am the only sufferer. So be it. My evil star brought on you these evil destinies: without me, you may revive, and be once more a nation. Yield to fate to-day, and you may grasp her proudest awards to-morrow. To succumb is not to be subdued. But, go forth against the Christians, and if ye win one battle, it is but to incur a more terrible war; if you lose, it is not honourable capitulation, but certain extermination to which you rush! Be persuaded, and listen once again to your king."

The crowd were moved, were softened, were half convinced. They turned, in silence, towards their santón; and Almamen did not shrink the appeal. Little as he cared for the Moors, his hatred for the Christians spurred him on to any measure that might redden the earth with their abhorred blood. He stood forth, confronting the king.

"King of Granada!" he cried aloud, "beheld thy friend — thy prophet! Lo! I assure you victory!"

"Hold!" interrupted Boabdil, "thou hast deceived and betrayed me too long! Moors! knowest thou this pretended santón? He is of no Moslem creed. He is a hound of Israel, who would sell you to the best bidder. Slay him!"

"Ha!" cried Almamen, "and who is my accuser?"

"Thy servant — behold him!" At these words, the royal guards lifted their torches, and the glare fell, redly, on the death like features of Ximen.

"Light of the world! there be other Jews that know him," said the traitor.

"Will ye suffer a Jew to lead ye, O race of the Prophet?" cried the king.

The crowd stood confused and bewildered: Almamen felt his hour was come; he remained silent, his arms folded, his brow erect.

"Be there any of the tribe of Moisa amongst the crowd?" cried Boabdil, pursuing his advantage; "if so, let them approach and testify what they know." Forth came — not from the crowd, but from amongst Boabdil's train, a well-known Israelite:

"We disown this man of blood and fraud," said Elias, bowing to the earth; "but he was of our creed."

"Speak, false santón! art thou dumb?" cried the king.

"A curse light on thee, dull fool!" cried Almamen, fiercely. "What matters who the instrument that would have restored to thee thy throne? Yes! I, who have ruled thy councils, who have led thine armies, I am of the race of Joshua and of Samuel — and the Lord of Hosts is the God of Almamen!"

A shudder ran through that mighty multitude: but the looks, the mien, and the voice of the man, awed them; and not a weapon was raised against him. He might, even then, have passed scathless through the crowd; he might have borne to other climes his burning passions and his torturing woes: but his care for life was past; he desired but to curse his dupes, and to die. He paused, looked round, and burst into a laugh of such bitter and haughty scorn, as the

tempted of earth may hear, in the halls below, from the lips of Eblis.

"Yes," he exclaimed, "such I am! I have been your idol and your lord; I may be your victim, but, in death, I am your vanquisher. Christian and Moslem alike my foe, I would have trampled upon both. But the Christian, wiser than you, gave me smooth words; and I would have sold ye to his power: wickeder than you, he deceived me; and I would have crushed him, that I might have continued to deceive and rule the puppets that ye call your chiefs. But they for whom I toiled, and laboured, and sinned — for whom I surrendered peace and ease, yea, and a daughter's person and a daughter's blood — they have betrayed me to your hands, and the Curse of Old rests with them evermore — Amen! The disguise is rent: Almamen, the santón, is the son of Issachar the Jew!"

More might he have said, but the spell was broken. With a ferocious yell those living waves of the multitude rushed over the stern fanatic; six cimeters passed through him, and he fell not: at the seventh he was a corpse. Trodden in the clay — then whirled aloft — limb torn from limb, — ere a man could have drawn breath nine times, scarce a vestige of the human form was left to the mangled and bloody clay.

One victim sufficed to slake the wrath of the crowd. They gathered like wild beasts, whose hunger is appeased, around their monarch, who in vain had endeavoured to stay their summary revenge, and who now, pale and breathless, shrunk from the passions he had excited. He faltered forth a few words of remonstrance and exhortation, turned the head of his steed, and took his way to his palace.

The crowd dispersed, but not yet to their homes. The crime of Almamen worked against his whole race. Some rushed to the Jews' quarter, which they set on fire; others to the lonely mansion of Almamen.

Ximen, on quitting the king, had been before the mob. Not anticipating such an effect of the popular rage, he had hastened to the house, which he now deemed at length his own. He had just reached the treasury of his dead lord — he had just feasted his eyes on the massive ingots and glittering gems: in the lust of his heart he had just cried aloud, "And these are mine!" when he heard the roar of the mob below the wall, — when he saw the glare of their torches against the casement. It was in vain that he shrieked aloud, "I am the man that exposed the Jew!" the wild winds scattered his words over a deafened audience. Driven from his chamber by the smoke and flame, afraid to venture forth amongst the crowd, the miser loaded himself with the most precious of the store: he descended the steps, he bent his way to the secret vault, when suddenly the floor, pierced by the flames, crashed under him, and the fire rushed up in a fiercer and more rapid volume, as his death-shriek broke through that lurid shroud.

Such were the principal events of the last night of the Moorish dynasty in Granada.

CHAPTER VII.

The end.

DAY dawned upon Granada: the populace had sought their homes, and a profound quiet wrapped the streets, save where, from the fires committed in the late tumult, was yet heard the crash of roofs, or the crackle of the light and fragrant timber employed in those pavilions of the summer. The manner in which the mansions of Granada were built, each separated from the other by extensive gardens, fortunately prevented the flames from extending. But the inhabitants cared so little for the hazard, that not a single guard remained to watch the result. Now and then, some miserable forms in the Jewish gown might be seen cowering by the ruins of their house, like the souls that, according to Plato, watch in charnels over their own mouldering bodies. Day dawned, and the beams of the winter sun, smiling away the clouds of the past night, played cheerily on the murmuring waves of the Xenil and the Darro.

Alone, upon a balcony commanding that stately landscape, stood the last of the Moorish kings. He had sought to bring to his aid all the lessons of the philosophy he had cultivated.

“What are we,” thought the musing prince, “that we should fill the world with ourselves — we kings!

Earth resounds with the crash of my falling throne: on the ear of races unborn the echo will live prolonged. But what have I lost? nothing that was necessary to my happiness, my repose; nothing save the source of all my wretchedness, the Marah of my life! Shall I less enjoy heaven and earth, or thought or action, or man's more material luxuries of food or sleep — the common and the cheap desires of all? At the worst, I sink but to a level with chiefs and princes: I am but levelled with those whom the multitude admire and envy. Arouse thee, then, O heart within me! many and deep emotions of sorrow or of joy are yet left to break the monotony of existence."

He paused; and, at the distance, his eye fell upon the lonely minarets of the distant and deserted palace of Muza Ben Abil Gazan.

"Thou wert right, then," resumed the king: "thou wert right, brave spirit, not to pity Boabdil: but not because death was in his power; man's soul is greater than his fortunes, and there is majesty in a life that towers above the ruins that fall around its path." He turned away, and his cheek suddenly grew pale; for he heard, in the courts below, the tread of hoofs, the bustle of preparation; it was the hour for his departure. His philosophy vanished: he groaned aloud, and re-entered the chamber, just as his vizier and the chief of his guard broke upon his solitude.

The old vizier attempted to speak, but his voice failed him.

"It is time, then, to depart," said Boabdil, with calmness; "let it be so: render up the palace and the

fortress, and join thy friend, no more thy monarch, in his new home."

He stayed not for reply: he hurried on, descended to the court, flung himself on his barb, and, with a small and saddened train, passed through the gate which we yet survey, by a blackened and crumbling tower, overgrown with vines and ivy; thence, amidst gardens, now appertaining to the convent of the victor faith, he took his mournful and unwitnessed way. When he came to the middle of the hill that rises above those gardens, the steel of the Spanish armour gleamed upon him, as the detachment sent to occupy the palace marched over the summit in steady order and profound silence.

At the head of this vanguard rode, upon a snow-white palfrey, the Bishop of Avila, followed by a long train of barefooted monks. They halted as Boabdil approached, and the grave bishop saluted him with the air of one who addresses an infidel and an inferior. With the quick sense of dignity common to the great, and yet more to the fallen, Boabdil felt, but resented not, the pride of the ecclesiastic. "Go, Christian," said he, mildly, "the gates of the Alhambra are open, and Allah has bestowed the palace and the city upon your king: may his virtues atone the faults of Boabdil!" So saying, and waiting no answer, he rode on, without looking to the right or left. The Spaniards also pursued their way. The sun had fairly risen above the mountains, when Boabdil and his train beheld, from the eminence on which they were, the whole armament of Spain: and at the same moment, louder than the tramp of horse, or the flash of arms, was heard distinctly the solemn chaunt of *Te Deum*, which

preceded the blaze of the unfurled and lofty standards. Boabdil, himself still silent, heard the groans and exclamations of his train; he turned to cheer or chide them, and then saw, from his own watch-tower, with the sun shining full upon its pure and dazzling surface, the silver cross of Spain. His Alhambra was already in the hands of the foe; while, beside that badge of the holy war, waved the gay and flaunting flag of St. Jago, the canonised Mars of the chivalry of Spain.

At that sight the king's voice died within him: he gave the rein to his barb, impatient to close the fatal ceremonial, and did not slacken his speed till almost within bowshot of the first ranks of the army. Never had Christian war assumed a more splendid and imposing aspect. Far as the eye could reach, extended the glittering and gorgeous lines of that goodly power, bristling with sunlit spears and blazoned banners; while beside, murmured and glowed and danced the silver and laughing Xenil, careless what lord should possess, for his little day, the banks that bloomed by its everlasting course. By a small mosque halted the flower of the army. Surrounded by the archpriests of that mighty hierarchy, the peers and princes of a court that rivalled the Rolands of Charlemagne, was seen the kingly form of Ferdinand himself, with Isabel at his right hand, and the high-born dames of Spain; relieving, with their gay colours and sparkling gems, the sterner splendour of the crested helmet and polished mail.

Within sight of the royal group Boabdil halted, — composed his aspect so as best to conceal his soul, — and, a little in advance of his scanty train, but never,

in mien and majesty, more a king, the son of Abdallah met his haughty conqueror.

At the sight of his princely countenance and golden hair, his comely and commanding beauty, made more touching by youth, a thrill of compassionate admiration ran through that assembly of the brave and fair. Ferdinand and Isabel slowly advanced to meet their late rival — their new subject; and, as Boabdil would have dismounted, the Spanish king placed his hand upon his shoulder. "Brother and prince," said he, "forget thy sorrows; and may our friendship hereafter console thee for reverses, against which thou hast contended as a hero and a king — resisting man, but resigned at length to God!"

Boabdil did not affect to return this bitter, but unintentional, mockery of compliment. He bowed his head, and remained a moment silent; then motioning to his train, four of his officers approached, and, kneeling beside Ferdinand, proffered to him, upon a silver buckler, the keys of the city.

"O king!" then said Boabdil, "accept the keys of the last hold which has resisted the arms of Spain! The empire of the Moslem is no more. Thine are the city and the people of Granada: yielding to thy prowess, they yet confide in thy mercy."

"They do well," said the king; "our promises shall not be broken. But, since we know the gallantry of Moorish cavaliers, not to us, but to gentler hands, shall the keys of Granada be surrendered."

Thus saying, Ferdinand gave the keys to Isabel, who would have addressed some soothing flatteries to

Boabdil: but the emotion and excitement were too much for her compassionate heart, heroine and queen though she was; and, when she lifted her eyes upon the calm and pale features of the fallen monarch, the tears gushed from them irresistibly, and her voice died in murmurs. A faint flush overspread the features of Boabdil, and there was a momentary pause of embarrassment, which the Moor was the first to break,

“Fair queen,” said he, with mournful and pathetic dignity, “thou canst read the heart that thy generous sympathy touches and subdues: this is thy last, nor least, glorious conquest. But I detain ye: let not my aspect cloud your triumph. Suffer me to say farewell.”

“May we not hint at the blessed possibility of conversion?” whispered the pious queen, through her tears, to her royal consort.

“Not now — not now, by Sain Iago!” returned Ferdinand, quickly, and in the same tone, willing himself to conclude a painful conference. He then added, aloud, “Go, my brother, and fair fortune with you! Forget the past.”

Boabdil smiled bitterly, saluted the royal pair with profound and silent reverence, and rode slowly on, leaving the army below, as he ascended the path that led to his new principality beyond the Alpuxarras. As the trees snatched the Moorish cavalcade from the view of the king, Ferdinand ordered the army to recommence its march; and trumpet and cymbal presently sent their music to the ear of the Moslems.

Boabdil spurred on at full speed, till his panting charger halted at the little village where his mother,

his slaves, and his faithful Amine (sent on before), awaited him. Joining these, he proceeded without delay upon his melancholy path.

They ascended that eminence which is the pass into the Alpuxarras. From its height, the vale, the rivers, the spires, the towers of Granada, broke gloriously upon the view of the little band. They halted, mechanically and abruptly: every eye was turned to the beloved scene. The proud shame of baffled warriors, the tender memories of home — of childhood — of fatherland, swelled every heart, and gushed from every eye. Suddenly, the distant boom of artillery broke from the citadel, and rolled along the sunlit valley and crystal river. An universal wail burst from the exiles; it smote — it overpowered the heart of the ill-starred king, in vain seeking to wrap himself in Eastern pride or stoical philosophy. The tears gushed from his eyes, and he covered his face with his hands.

Then said his haughty mother, gazing at him with hard and disdainful eyes, in that unjust and memorable reproach which history has preserved — “Ay, weep, like a woman, over what thou couldst not defend like a man!”

Boabdil raised his countenance, with indignant majesty, when he felt his hand tenderly clasped, and, turning round, saw Amine by his side.

“Heed her not! heed her not, Boabdil!” said the slave; “never didst thou seem to me more noble than in that sorrow. Thou wert a hero for thy throne; but feel still, O light of mine eyes, a woman for thy people!”

“God is great!” said Boabdil, “and God comforts me still! Thy lips, which never flattered me in my power, have no reproach for me in my affliction!”

He said, and smiled upon Amine — it was *her* hour of triumph.

The band wound slowly on through the solitary defiles: and that place where the king wept, and the woman soothed, is still called “*El ultimo suspiro del Moro*,” — **THE LAST SIGH OF THE MOOR.**

1950

CALDERON, THE COURTIER:

A TALE.

CHAPTER I.

The antechamber.

THE Tragi-Comedy of Court Intrigue, which had ever found its principal theatre in Spain since the accession of the House of Austria to the throne, was represented with singular complication of incident, and brilliancy of performance, during the reign of Philip the Third. That monarch, weak, indolent, and superstitious, left the reins of government in the hands of the Duke of Lerma. The Duke of Lerma, in his turn, mild, easy, ostentatious, and shamefully corrupt, resigned the authority he had thus received to Roderigo Calderon, an able and resolute upstart, whom nature and fortune seemed equally to favour and endow. But, not more to his talents, which were great, than to the policy of religious persecution which he had supported and enforced, Roderigo Calderon owed his promotion. The King and the Inquisition had, some years before

our story opens, resolved upon the general expulsion of the Moriscos — the wealthiest, the most active, the most industrious portion of the population.

“I would sooner,” said the bigoted king — and his words were hallowed by the enthusiasm of the church — “depopulate my kingdom than suffer it to harbour a single infidel.”

The Duke de Lerma entered into the scheme that lost to Spain many of her most valuable subjects, with the zeal of a pious Catholic, expectant of the cardinal's hat which he afterwards obtained. But to this scheme Calderon brought an energy, a decision, — a vehemence, and sagacity of hatred, that savoured more of personal vengeance than religious persecution. His perseverance in this good work established him firmly in the king's favour; and in this he was supported by the friendship not only of Lerma, but of Fray Louis de Aliaga, a renowned Jesuit, and confessor to the king. The disasters and distresses occasioned by this barbarous crusade, which crippled the royal revenues, and seriously injured the estates of the principal barons, from whose lands the industrious and intelligent Moriscos were expelled, ultimately concentrated a deep and general hatred upon Calderon. But his extraordinary address and vigorous energies, his perfect mastery of the science of intrigue, not only sustained, but continued to augment, his power. Though the king was yet in the prime of middle age, his health was infirm and his life precarious. Calderon had contrived, while preserving the favour of the reigning monarch, to establish himself as the friend and companion of the heir apparent. In this, indeed, he had affected to yield to the policy of the king himself; for Philip the Third had a wholesome terror of the possible

ambition of his son, who early evinced talents which might have been formidable, but for passions which urged him into the most vicious pleasures, and the most extravagant excesses. The craft of the king was satisfied by the device of placing about the person of the Infant one devoted to himself; nor did his conscience, pious as he was, revolt at the profligacy which his favourite was said to participate and, perhaps, to encourage; since, the less popular the prince, the more powerful the king.

But, all this while, there was formed a powerful cabal against both the Duke of Lerma and Don Roderigo Calderon, in a quarter where it might least have been anticipated. The cardinal duke, naturally anxious to cement and perpetuate his authority, had placed his son, the Duke d'Uzeda, in a post that gave him constant access to the monarch. The prospect of power made Uzeda eager to seize at once upon all its advantages; and it became the object of his life to supplant his father. This would have been easy enough but for the genius and vigilance of Calderon, whom he hated as a rival, disdained as an upstart, and dreaded as a foe. Philip was soon aware of the contest between the two factions, but, in the true spirit of Spanish kingcraft, he took care to play one against the other. Nor could Calderon powerful as he was, dare openly to seek the ruin of Uzeda; while Uzeda, more rash and, perhaps, more ingenuous, entered into a thousand plots for the downfall of the prime favourite.

The frequent missions, principally into Portugal, in which of late Calderon had been employed, had allowed Uzeda to encroach more and more upon the royal confidence; while the very means which Don Roderigo had

adopted to perpetuate his influence, by attaching himself to the prince, necessarily distracted his attention from the intrigues of his rival. Perhaps, indeed, the greatness of Calderon's abilities made him too arrogantly despise the machinations of the duke, who, though not without some capacities as a courtier, was wholly incompetent to those duties of a minister on which he had set his ambition and his grasp.

Such was the state of parties in the Court of Philip the Third, at the time in which we commence our narrative in the antechamber of Don Roderigo Calderon.

"It is not to be endured," said Don Felix de Castro, an old noble, whose sharp features and diminutive stature proclaimed the purity of his blood and the antiquity of his descent.

"Just three-quarters of an hour and five minutes have I waited for audience to a fellow who would once have thought himself honoured if I had ordered him to call my coach," said Don Diego Sarmiento de Mendoza.

"Then, if it chafe you so much, gentleman, why come you here at all? I dare say, Don Roderigo can dispense with your attendance."

This was said bluntly by a young noble of good mien, whose impetuous and irritable temperament betrayed itself by an impatience of gesture and motion unusual amongst his countrymen. Sometimes he walked, with uneven strides, to and fro the apartments, unheeding the stately groups whom he jostled, or the reproving looks that he attracted; sometimes he paused abruptly, raised his eyes, muttered, twitched his cloak, or played with his sword-knot; or, turning abruptly round upon his solemn neighbours, as some remark on his strange

bearing struck his ear, brought the blood to many a haughty cheek by his stern gaze of defiance and disdain. It was easy to perceive that this personage belonged to the tribe — rash, vain, and young — who are eager to take offence, and to provoke quarrel. Nevertheless, the cavalier had noble and great qualities. A stranger to courts, in the camp he was renowned for a chivalrous generosity and an extravagant valour, that emulated the ancient heroes of Spanish romaunt and song. His was a dawn that promised a hot noon and a glorious eve. The name of this brave soldier was Martin Fonseca. He was of an ancient but impoverished house, and related, in a remote degree, to the Duke de Lerma. In his earliest youth he had had cause to consider himself the heir to a wealthy uncle on his mother's side; and with those expectations, while still but a boy, he had been invited to court by the cardinal duke. Here, however, the rude and blunt sincerity of his bearing had so greatly shocked the formal hypocrisies of the court, and had more than once so seriously offended the minister, that his powerful kinsman gave up all thought of pushing Fonseca's fortunes at Madrid, and meditated some plausible excuse for banishing him from court. At this time, the rich uncle, hitherto childless, married a second time, and was blessed with an heir. It was no longer necessary to keep terms with Don Martin; and he suddenly received an order to join the army on the frontiers. Here his courage soon distinguished him; but his honest nature still stood in the way of his promotion. Several years elapsed, and his rise had been infinitely slower than that of men not less inferior to him in birth than merit. Some months since, he had repaired to Madrid, to enforce his claims upon the government; but, instead of ad-

vancing his suit, he had contrived to effect a serious breach with the cardinal, and been abruptly ordered back to the camp. Once more he appeared at Madrid; but this time it was not to plead desert, and demand honours.

In any country but Spain under the reign of Philip the Third, Martin Fonseca would have risen early to high fortunes. But, as we have said, his talents were not those of the flatterer or the hypocrite; and it was a matter of astonishment to the calculators round him to see Don Martin Fonseca in the anteroom of Roderigo Calderon, Count Oliva, Marquis de Siete Iglesias, secretary to the King, and parasite and favourite of the Infant of Spain.

"Why come you here at all?" repeated the young soldier.

"Señor," answered Don Felix de Castro, with great gravity, "we have business with Don Roderigo. Men of our station must attend to the affairs of the state, no matter by whom transacted."

"That is, you must crawl on your knees to ask for pensions and governorships, and transact the affairs of the state by putting your hands into its coffers."

"Señor!" growled Don Felix, angrily, as his hand played with his sword-belt.

"Tush!" said the young man, scornfully, turning on his heel.

The folding-doors were thrown open, and all conversation ceased at the entrance of Don Roderigo Calderon.

This remarkable personage had risen from the situation of a confidential scribe to the Duke of Lerma, to the nominal rank of secretary to the King — to the real station of autocrat of Spain. The birth of the favourite

of fortune was exceedingly obscure. He had long affected to conceal it; but, when he found curiosity had proceeded into serious investigation of his origin, he had suddenly appeared to make a virtue of necessity; proclaimed, of his own accord, that his father was a common soldier of Valladolid; and even invited to Madrid, and lodged in his own palace, his low-born progenitor. This prudent frankness disarmed malevolence on the score of birth. But, when the old soldier died, rumours went abroad that he had confessed, on his death-bed, that he was not in any way related to Calderon; that he had submitted to an imposture which secured to his old age so respectable and luxurious an asylum; and that he knew not for what end Calderon had forced upon him the honours of spurious parentship. This tale, which, ridiculed by most, was yet believed by some, gave rise to darker reports concerning one on whom the eyes of all Spain were fixed. It was supposed that he had some motive, beyond that of shame at their meanness, to conceal his real origin and name. What could be that motive, if not the dread of discovery for some black and criminal offence, connected with his earlier youth, and for which he feared the prosecution of the law? They who affected most to watch his exterior, averred that often, in his gayest revels and proudest triumphs, his brow would lower — his countenance change — and it was only by a visible and painful effort that he could restore his mind to its self-possession. His career, which evinced an utter contempt for the ordinary rules and scruples that curb even adventurers into a seeming of honesty and virtue, appeared in some way to justify these reports. But, at times, flashes of sudden and brilliant magnanimity broke forth to bewilder the curious,

to puzzle the examiners of human character, and to contrast the general tenor of his ambitious and remorseless ascent to power. His genius was confessed by all, but it was a genius that in no way promoted the interests of his country. It served only to prop, defend, and advance himself — to baffle difficulties — to defeat foes — to convert every accident, every chance, into new stepping-stones in his course. Whatever his birth, it was evident that he had received every advantage of education; and scholars extolled his learning and boasted of his patronage. While, more recently, if the daring and wild excesses of the profligate prince were, on the one hand, popularly imputed to the guidance of Calderon, and increased the hatred generally conceived against him; so, on the other hand, his influence over the future monarch seemed to promise a new lease to his authority, and struck fear into the councils of his foes. In fact, the power of the upstart marquis appeared so firmly rooted, the career before him so splendid, that there were not wanted whisperers, who, in addition to his other crimes, ascribed to Roderigo Calderon the assistance of the black art. But the black art in which that subtle courtier was a proficient, is one that dispenses with necromancy. It was the art of devoting the highest intellect to the most selfish purposes — an art that thrives tolerably well, for a time, in the great world!

He had been for several weeks absent from Madrid on a secret mission; and to this, his first public levee, on his return, thronged all the rank and chivalry of Spain.

The crowd gave way, as, with haughty air, in the maturity of manhood, the Marquis de Siete Iglesias moved along. He disdained all accessories of dress, to enhance the effect of his singularly striking exterior. His

mantle and vest of black cloth, made in the simplest fashion, were unadorned with the jewels that then constituted the ordinary insignia of rank. His hair, bright and glossy as the raven's plume, curled back from the lofty and commanding brow, which, save by one deep wrinkle between the eyes, was not only as white, but as smooth, as marble. His features were aquiline and regular; and the deep olive of his complexion seemed pale and clear, when contrasted by the rich jet of the moustache and pointed beard. The lightness of his tall and slender, but muscular form, made him appear younger than he was; and, had it not been for the supercilious and scornful arrogance of air which so seldom characterises gentle birth, Calderon might have mingled with the loftiest magnates of Europe, and seemed to the observer the stateliest of the group. It was one of those rare forms that are made to command the one sex and fascinate the other. But, on a deeper scrutiny, the restlessness of the brilliant eye — the quiver of the upper lip — a certain abruptness of manner and speech, might have shewn that greatness had brought suspicion as well as pride. The spectators beheld the huntsman on the height; — the huntsman saw the abyss below, and respired with difficulty the air above.

The courtiers one by one approached the marquis, who received them with very unequal courtesy. To the common herd he was sharp, dry, and bitter; to the great he was obsequious, yet with a certain grace and manliness of bearing that elevated even the character of servility; and all the while, as he bowed low to a Medina, or a Guzman, there was a half imperceptible mockery lurking in the corners of his mouth, which seemed to imply that, while his policy cringed, his heart despised. To two or

three, whom he either personally liked, or honestly esteemed, he was familiar, but brief, in his address; to those whom he had cause to detest or to dread — his foes, his underminers — he assumed a yet greater frankness, mingled with the most caressing insinuation of voice and manner.

Apart from the herd, with folded arms, and an expression of countenance in which much admiration was blent with some curiosity and a little contempt, Don Martin Fonseca gazed upon the favourite.

"I have done this man a favour," thought he: "I have contributed towards his first rise — I am now his suppliant. 'Faith! I, who have never found sincerity or gratitude in the camp, come to seek those hidden treasures at a court! Well, we are strange puppets, we mortals!'"

Don Diego Sarmiento de Mendoza had just received the smiling salutation of Calderon, when the eye of the latter fell upon the handsome features of Fonseca. The blood mounted to his brow; he hastily promised Don Diego all that he desired; and, hurrying back through the crowd, retired to his private cabinet. The levee was broken up.

As Fonseca, who had caught the glance of the secretary, and who drew no favourable omen from his sudden evanishment, slowly turned to depart with the rest, a young man, plainly dressed, touched him on the shoulder.

"You are Señor Don Martin Fonseca?"

"The same."

"Follow me, if it please you, señor, to my master, Don Roderigo Calderon."

Fonseca's face brightened; he obeyed the summons; and in another moment he was in the cabinet of the Sejanus of Spain.

CHAPTER II.

The lover and the confidant.

CALDERON received the young soldier at the door of his chamber with marked and almost affectionate respect.

"Don Martin," said he, and there seemed a touch of true feeling in the tremor of his rich sweet voice, "I owe you the greatest debt one man can incur to another — it was your hand that set before my feet their first stepping-stone to power. I date my fortunes from the hour in which I was placed in your father's house as your preceptor. When the cardinal duke invited you to Madrid, I was your companion; and when, afterwards, you joined the army, and required no longer the services of the peaceful scholar, you demanded of your illustrious kinsman the single favour — to provide for Calderon. I had already been fortunate enough to win the countenance of the duke, and from that day my rise was rapid. Since then we have never met. Dare I hope that it is now in the power of Calderon to prove himself not ungrateful?"

"Yes," said Fonseca, eagerly, "it is in your power to save me from the most absolute wretchedness that can befall me. It is in your power, at least I think so, to render me the happiest of men!"

"Be seated, I pray you, señor. And how? I am your servant."

"Thou knowest," said Fonseca, "that, though the kinsman, I am not the favourite, of the Duke of Lerma."

"Nay, nay," interrupted Calderon, softly, and with a bland smile, "you misunderstand my illustrious patron: he loves you, but not your indiscretions."

"Yes, honesty is very indiscreet! I cannot stoop to the life of the antechamber; I cannot, like the Duke of Lerma, detest my nearest relative, if his shadow cross the line of my interests. I am of the race of Pelayo, not Oppas; and my profession, rather that of an ancient Persian than a modern Spaniard, is to manage the steed, to wield the sword, and to speak the truth."

There was an earnestness and gallantry in the young man's aspect, manner, and voice, as he thus spoke, which afforded the strongest contrast to the inscrutable brow and artificial softness of Calderon; and which, indeed, for the moment, occasioned that crafty and profound adventurer an involuntary feeling of self-humiliation.

"But," continued Fonseca, "let this pass: I come to my story and my request. Do you, or do you not know, that I have been for some time attached to Beatriz Coello?"

"Beatriz," repeated Calderon, abstractedly, with an altered countenance, "it is a sweet name — it was my mother's!"

"Your mother's! I thought to have heard her name was Mary Sandalen?"

"True — Mary Beatriz Sandalen," replied Calderon, indifferently. "But, proceed. I heard, after your last visit to Madrid, when, owing to my own absence in Portugal, I was not fortunate enough to see you, that you

had offended the duke by desiring an alliance unsuitable to your birth. Who, then, is this Beatriz Coello?"

"An orphan of humble origin and calling. In infancy she was left to the care of a woman who, I believe, had been her nurse; they were settled in Seville, and the old *gouvernante's* labours in embroidery maintained them both till Beatriz was fourteen. At that time the poor woman was disabled, by a stroke of palsy, from continuing her labours; and Beatriz, good child, yearning to repay the obligations she had received, in her turn sought to maintain her protectress. She possessed the gift of a voice wonderful for its sweetness. This gift came to the knowledge of the superintendent of the theatre at Seville: he made her the most advantageous proposals to enter upon the stage. Beatriz, innocent child, was unaware of the perils of that profession: she accepted, eagerly, the means that would give comfort to the declining life of her only friend — she became an actress. At that time we were quartered in Seville, to keep guard on the suspected Moriscos."

"Ah, the hated infidels!" muttered Calderon, fiercely, through his teeth.

"I saw Beatriz, and loved her at first sight. I do not say," added Fonseca, with a blush, "that my suit, at the outset, was that which alone was worthy of her; but her virtue soon won my esteem, as well as love. I left Seville to seek my father, and obtain his consent to a marriage with Beatriz. You know a *hidalgo's* prejudices — they are insuperable. Meanwhile the fame of the beauty and voice of the young actress reached Madrid, and hither she was removed from Seville, by royal command. To Madrid, then, I hastened, on the pretence of demanding promotion. You, as you have

stated, were absent in Portugal, on some state mission. I sought the Duke de Lerma. I implored him to give me some post, anywhere — I recked not beneath what sky, in the vast empire of Spain — in which, removed from the prejudices of birth and of class, and provided with other means, less precarious than those that depend on the sword, I might make Beatriz my wife. The polished duke was more inexorable than the stern hidalgo. I flew to Beatriz; I told her I had nothing but my heart and right hand to offer. She wept, and she refused me.”

“Because you were not rich?”

“Shame on you, no! but because she would not consent to mar my fortunes, and banish me from my native land. The next day I received a peremptory order to rejoin the army, and with that order came a brevet of promotion. Lover though I be, I am a Spaniard: to have disobeyed the order would have been dishonour. Hope dawned upon me — I might rise, I might become rich. We exchanged our vows of fidelity. I returned to the camp. We corresponded. At last her letters alarmed me. Through all her reserve, I saw that she was revolted by her profession, and terrified at the persecutions to which it exposed her: the old woman, her sole guide and companion, was dying: she was dejected and unhappy: she despaired of our union; she expressed a desire for the refuge of the cloister. At last came this letter, bidding me farewell for ever. Her relation was dead; and, with the little money she had amassed, she had bought her entrance into the convent of St. Mary of the White Sword. Imagine my despair! I obtained leave of absence — I

flew to Madrid. Beatriz is already immured in that dreary asylum; she has entered on her noviciate."

"Is that the letter you refer to?" said Calderon, extending his hand.

Fonseca gave him the letter.

Hard and cold as Calderon's character had grown, there was something in the tone of this letter — its pure and noble sentiments, its innocence, its affection — that touched some mystic chord in his heart. He sighed as he laid it down.

"You are, like all of us, Don Martin," said he, with a bitter smile, "the dupe of a woman's faith. But you must purchase experience for yourself; and if, indeed, you ask my services to procure you present bliss and future disappointment, those services are yours. It will not, I think, be difficult to interest the queen in your favour: leave me this letter, it is one to touch the heart of a woman. If we succeed with the queen, who is the patroness of the convent, we may be sure to obtain an order from court for the liberation of the novice: the next step is one more arduous. It is not enough to restore Beatriz to freedom — we must reconcile your family to the marriage. This cannot be done while she is not noble; but letters patent (here Calderon smiled) could ennoble a mushroom itself — your humble servant is an example. Such letters may be bought or begged; I will undertake to procure them. Your father, too, may find a dowry accompanying the title, in the shape of a high and honourable post for yourself. You deserve much; you are beloved in the army; you have won a high name in the world. I take shame on myself that your fortunes have been overlooked. 'Out of sight out of mind;' alas! it is a

true proverb. I confess that, when I beheld you in the ante-room, I blushed for my past forgetfulness. No matter — I will repair my fault. Men say that my patronage is misapplied — I will prove the contrary by your promotion.”

“Generous Calderon!” said Fonseca, falteringly, “I ever hated the judgments of the vulgar. They calumniate you; it is from envy.”

“No,” said Calderon, coldly, “I am bad enough, but I am still human. Besides, gratitude is my policy; I have always found that it is a good way to get on in the world, to serve those who serve us.”

“But the duke?”

“Fear not; I have an oil that will smooth all the billows on that surface. As for the letter, I say, leave it with me; I will shew it to the queen. Let me see you again to-morrow.”

CHAPTER III.

A rival.

CALDERON’S eyes were fixed musingly on the door which closed on Fonseca’s martial and noble form.

“Great contrasts among men!” said he, half aloud. “All the classes into which naturalists ever divided the animal world contain not the variety that exists between man and man. And, yet, we all agree in one object of our being — all prey on each other! Glory, which is but the thirst of blood, makes yon soldier the tiger of his kind; other passions have made me

the serpent: both fierce, relentless, unscrupulous — both! hero and courtier, valour and craft! Hem! I will serve this young man — he has served me. When all other affection was torn from me, he, then a boy, smiled on me, and bade me love him. Why has he been so long forgotten? He is not of the race that I abhor; no Moorish blood flows in his veins; neither is he of the great and powerful, whom I dread; nor of the crouching and the servile, whom I despise: he is one whom I can aid without a blush.”

While Calderon thus soliloquised, the arras was lifted aside, and a cavalier, on whose cheek was the first down of manhood, entered the apartment.

“So, Roderigo, alone! welcome back to Madrid. Nay, seat thyself, man — seat thyself.”

Calderon bowed with the deepest reverence; and, placing a large *fauteuil* before the stranger, seated himself on a stool at a little distance.

The new-comer was of dark and saturnine complexion; but his features, on the whole, were comely, and his gorgeous dress sparkled with prodigal jewels. Boy as he was, there was yet a careless loftiness, a haughty ease, in the gesture — the bend of the neck, the wave of the hand, which, coupled with the almost servile homage of the arrogant favourite, would have convinced the most superficial observer that he was born of the highest rank. A second glance would have betrayed, in the full Austrian lip — the high, but narrow forehead — the dark, voluptuous, but crafty and sinister eye, the features of the descendant of Charles V. It was the Infant of Spain that stood in the chamber of his ambitious minion.

"This is convenient, this private entrance into thy penetralia, Roderigo. It shelters me from the prying eyes of Uzeda, who ever seeks to cozen the sire by spying on the son. We will pay him off one of these days. He loves you less than he does his prince."

"I bear no malice to him for that, your highness. He covets the smiles of the rising sun, and rails at the humbe object which, he thinks, obstructs the beam."

"He might be easy on that score: I hate the man, and his cold formalities. He is ever fancying that we princes are intent on the affairs of state, and forgets that we are mortal, and that youth is the age for the bower, not the council. My precious Calderon, life would be dull without thee: how I rejoice at thy return, thou best inventor of pleasure that satiety ever prayed for! Nay, blush not: some men despise thee for thy talents; I do thee homage. By my great grand-sire's beard, it will be a merry time at court when I am monarch, and thou minister!"

Calderon looked earnestly at the prince, but his scrutiny did not serve to dispel a certain suspicion of the royal sincerity that ever and anon came across the favourite's most sanguine dreams. With all Philip's gaiety, there was something restrained and latent in his ambiguous smile, and his calm, deep, brilliant eye. Calderon, immeasurably above his lord in genius, was scarcely, perhaps, the equal of that beardless boy in hypocrisy and craft, in selfish coldness, in matured depravity.

"Well," resumed the prince, "I pay you not these compliments without an object. I have need of you — great need; never did I so require your services as at this moment; neyer was there so great demand

on your invention, your courage, your skill. Know, Calderon, I love!"

"My prince," said the marquis, smiling, "it is certainly not first love. How often has your highness —"

"No," interrupted the prince, hastily — "no, I never loved till now. We never can love what we can easily win; but this, Calderon, *this* heart would be a conquest. Listen. I was at the convent chapel of St. Mary of the White Sword yesterday with the queen. Thou knowest that the abbess once was a lady of the chamber, and the queen loves her. Both of us were moved and astonished by the voice of one of the choir — it was that of a novice. After the ceremony, the queen made inquiries touching this new Santa Cecilia; and who dost thou think she is? No; thou wilt never guess! — the once celebrated singer — the beautiful, the inimitable Beatriz Coello! Ah! you may well look surprised; when actresses turn nuns, it is wellnigh time for Calderon and Philip to turn monks. Now, you must know, Roderigo, that I, unworthy though I be, am the cause of this conversion. There is a certain Martin Fonseca, a kinsman of Lerma's — thou knowest him well. I learned, some time since, from the duke, that this young Orlando was most madly enamoured of a low-born girl — nay, desired to wed her. The duke's story moved my curiosity. I found that it was the young Beatriz Coello, whom I had already admired on the stage. Ah, Calderon, she blazed and set during thy dull mission to Lisbon! I sought an opportunity to visit her. I was astonished at her beauty, that seemed more dazzling in the chamber than on the stage. I pressed my suit — in vain. Calderon, hear you that? — in vain! Why wert thou not by? Thy

arts never fail, my friend! She was living with an old relation, or *gouvernante*. The old relation died suddenly — I took advantage of her loneliness — I entered her house at night. By St. Jago, her virtue baffled and defeated me. The next morning she was gone; nor could my researches discover her, until at the convent of St Mary I recognised the lost actress in the young novice. She has fled to the convent to be true to Fonseca; she must fly from the convent to bless the prince! This is my tale: I want thy aid.”

“Prince,” said Calderon, gravely, “thou knowest the laws of Spain — the rigour of the church. I dare not” —

“Pshaw! No scruples — my rank will bear thee harmless. Nay, look not so demure; why, even thou, I see, hast thy Armida. This billet in a female hand — Heaven and earth! Calderon! What name is this? Beatriz Coello! Darest thou have crossed my path? Speak, sir! — speak!”

“Your highness,” said Calderon, with a mixture of respect and dignity in his manner, — “your highness, hear me. My first benefactor, my beloved pupil, my earliest patron, was the same Don Martin Fonseca who seeks this girl with an honest love. This morning he has visited me, to implore my intercession on his behalf. Oh, prince! turn not away: thou knowest not half his merit. Thou knowest not the value of such subjects — men of the old iron race of Spain. Thou hast a noble and royal heart; be not the rival to the defender of thy crown. Bless this brave soldier — spare this poor orphan — and one generous act of self-denial shall give thee absolution for a thousand pleasures.”

"This from Roderigo Calderon!" said the prince, with a bitter sneer. "Man, know thy station, and thy profession. When I want homilies, I seek my confessor; when I have resolved on a vice, I come to thee. A truce with this bombast. For Fonseca, he shall be consoled; and when he shall learn who is his rival, he is a traitor if he remain discontented with his lot. Thou shalt aid me, Calderon!"

"Your highness will pardon me — no!"

"Do I hear right? No! — Art thou not my minion — my instrument? Can I not destroy as I have helped to raise thee? Thy fortunes have turned thy brain. The king already suspects and dislikes thee; thy foe, Uzeda, has his ear. The people execrate thee. If I abandon thee, thou art lost. Look to it!"

Calderon remained mute and erect, with his arms folded on his breast, and his cheek flushed with suppressed passions. Philipp gazed at him earnestly, and then, muttering to himself, approached the favourite with an altered air.

"Come, Calderon — I have been hasty — you maddened me; I meant not to wound you. Thou art honest, and I think thou lovest me; and I will own, that in ordinary circumstances thy advice would be good, and thy scruples laudable. But I tell thee, that I adore this girl; that I have set all my hopes upon her; that at whatever cost, whatever risk, she must be mine. Wilt *thou* desert me? Wilt thou, on whose faith I have ever leaned so trustingly, forsake thy friend and thy prince for this brawling soldier! No; I wrong thee."

"Oh!" said Calderon, with much semblance of emotion, — "I would lay down my life in your service, and I have often surrendered my conscience to your

lightest will. But this would be so base a perfidy in me! He has confided his life of life to my hands. How canst even thou count on my faith, if thou knowest me false to another?"

"False! art thou not false to me? Have I not confided to thee, and dost thou not desert me — nay, perhaps, betray? How wouldst thou serve this Fonseca? How liberate the novice?"

"By an order of the court. Your royal mother —"

"Enough!" said the prince, fiercely; "do so. Thou shalt have leisure for repentance."

As he spoke, Philipp strode to the door. Calderon, alarmed and anxious, sought to detain him; but the prince broke disdainfully away, and Calderon was again alone.

CHAPTER IV.

Civil ambition, and ecclesiastical.

SCARCELY had the prince vanished, before the door that led from the anteroom was opened, and an old man, in the ecclesiastical garb, entered the secretary's cabinet.

"Do I intrude, my son?" said the churchman.

"No, father, no; I never more desired your presence — your counsel. It is not often that I stand halting and irresolute between the twin magnets of interest and conscience: this is one of those rare dilemmas."

Here Calderon rapidly narrated the substance of his conversation with Fonseca, and of the subsequent communication with the prince.

"You see," he said, in conclusion, "how critical is my position. On one side, my obligations to Fonseca, my promise to a benefactor, a friend, to the boy I assisted to rear: nor is that all; the prince asks me to connive at the abstraction of a novice from a consecrated house. What peril — what hazard! On the other side, if I refuse, the displeasure, the vengeance of the prince, for whose favour I have already half forfeited that of the king; and who, were he once to frown upon me, would encourage all my enemies — in other phrase, the whole court — in one united attempt at my ruin."

"It is a stern trial," said the monk, gravely; "and one that may well excite your fear."

"Fear, Aliaga! — ha! ha! fear!" said Calderon, laughing scornfully. "Did true ambition ever know fear? Have we not the old Castilian proverb, that tells us, 'He who has climbed the first step to power, has left terror a thousand leagues behind?' No, it is not fear that renders me irresolute; it is wisdom, and some touch, some remnant, of human nature — philosophers would call it virtue; you priests, religion."

"Son," said the priest, "when, as one of that sublime calling, which enables us to place our unshodden feet upon the necks of kings, I felt that I had the power to serve and to exalt you; when, as confessor to Philipp, I backed the patronage of Lerma, recommended you to the royal notice, and brought you into the sunshine of the royal favour — it was because I had read in your heart and brain those qualities of which the spiritual masters of the world ever seek to avail their cause. I knew thee, brave, crafty, aspiring, unscrupulous. I knew that thou wouldest not shrink at

the means that could secure to thee a noble end. Yea, when, years ago, in the valley of the Xenil, I saw thee bathe thy hands in the blood of thy foe, and heard thy laugh of exulting scorn; — when I, alone master of thy secret, beheld thee afterwards flying from thy home, stained with a second murder, but still calm, stern, and lord of thine own reason, my knowledge of mankind told me, ‘Of such men are high converts and mighty instruments made!’”

— The priest paused; for Calderon heard him not. His cheek was livid, his eyes closed, his chest heaved wildly.

“Horrible remembrance!” he muttered! “fatal love — dread revenge! Inez — Inez, what hast thou to answer for!”

“Be soothed, my son; I meant not to tear the bandage from thy wounds.”

“Who speaks?” cried Calderon, starting. “Ha, priest! priest! I thought I heard the Dead. Talk on, talk on: talk of the world — the inquisition — thy plots — the torture — the rack! Talk of aught that will lead me back from the past.”

“No; let me for a moment lead thee thither, in order to portray the future that awaits thee. When, at night, I found thee — the blood-stained fugitive — cowering beneath the shadow of the forest, dost thou remember that I laid my hand upon thine arm, and said to thee, ‘Thy life is in my power?’ From that hour, thy disdain of my threats, of myself, of thine own life — all made me view thee as one born to advance our immortal cause. I led thee to safety far away; I won thy friendship and thy confidence. Thou becamest one of us — one of the great Order of Jesus.

Subsequently I placed thee as the tutor to young Fonseca, then heir to great fortunes. The second marriage of his uncle, and the heir that by that marriage interposed between him and the honour of his house, rendered the probable alliance of the youth profitless to us. But thou hadst procured his friendship. He presented thee to the Duke of Lerma. I was just then appointed confessor to the king; I found that years had ripened thy genius, and memory had blunted in thee all the affections of the flesh. Above all, hating, as thou didst, the very name of the Moor, thou wert the man of men to aid in our great design of expelling the accursed race from the land of Spain. Enough — I served thee, and thou didst repay us. Thou hast washed out thy crime in the blood of the infidel — thou art safe from detection. In Roderigo Calderon, Marquis de Siete Iglesias, who will suspect the Roderigo Nunez — the murderous student of Salamanca? Our device of the false father stifled even curiosity. Thou mayest wake to the future, nor tremble at one shadow in the past. The brightest hopes are before us both; but, to realise them, we must continue the same path. We must never halt at an obstacle in our way. We must hold that to be no crime which advances our common objects. Mesh upon mesh we must entangle the future monarch in our web: thou, by the nets of pleasure; I, by those of superstition. The day that sees Philip the Fourth upon the throne, must be a day of jubilee for the Brotherhood and the Inquisition. When thou art prime minister, and I the grand inquisitor — that time must come — we shall have the power to extend the sway of the sect of Loyola to the ends of the Christian world. The inquisition itself our tool! Pos-

terity shall regard us as the apostles of intellectual faith. And thinkest thou that, for the attainment of these great ends, we can have the tender scruples of common men? Perish a thousand Fonsecas — ten thousand novices, ere thou lose, by the strength of a hair, thy hold over the senses and soul of the licentious Philip! At whatever hazard, save thy power; for with it are bound, as mariners to a plank, the hopes of those who make the mind a sceptre."

"Thy enthusiasm blinds and misleads thee, Aliaga," said Calderon, coldly. "For me, I tell thee now, as I have told thee before, that I care not a rush for thy grand objects. Let mankind serve itself, — I look to myself alone. But fear not my faith; my interests and my very life are identified with thee and thy fellow fanatics. If I desert thee, thou art too deep in my secrets not to undo me; and were I to slay thee, in order to silence thy testimony, I know enough of thy fraternity to know that I should but raise up a multitude of avengers. As for this matter, you give me wise, if not pious counsel. I will consider well of it Adieu! The hour summons me to attend the king."

CHAPTER V.

The true fata morgana.

IN the royal chamber, before a table covered with papers, sate the King and his Secretary. Grave, sullen, and taciturn, there was little in the habitual manner of Philip the Third that could betray to the most experienced courtier the outward symptoms of favour or caprice. Education had fitted him for the cloister, but the necessities of despotism had added acute cunning to slavish superstition. The business for which Calderon had been summoned was despatched, with a silence broken but by monosyllables from the king, and brief explanations from the secretary; and Philip rising, gave the signal for Calderon to retire. It was then that the king, turning a dull, but steadfast eye, upon the marquis, said, with a kind of effort, as if speech were painful to him, —

“The prince left me but a minute before your entrance — have you seen him since your return?”

“Your majesty, yes. He honoured me this morning with his presence.”

“On state affairs?”

“Your majesty knows, I trust, that your servant treats of state affairs only with your august self, or your appointed ministers.”

“The prince has favoured you, Don Roderigo.”

“Your majesty commanded me to seek that favour.”

"It is true. Happy the monarch whose faithful servant is the confidant of the heir to his crown!"

"Could the prince harbour one thought displeasing to your majesty, I think I could detect, and quell it at its birth. But your majesty is blessed in a grateful son."

"I believe it. His love of pleasure decoys him from ambition — so it should be. I am not an austere parent. Keep his favour, Don Roderigo; it pleases me. Hast thou offended him in aught?"

"I trust I have not incurred so great a misfortune."

"He spoke not of thee with his usual praises — I noticed it. I tell thee this, that thou mayest rectify what is wrong. Thou canst not serve me more than by guarding him from all friendships save with those whose affection to myself I can trust. I have said enough."

"Such has ever been my object. But I have not the youth of the prince, and men speak ill of me, that, in order to gain his confidence, I share in his pursuits."

"It matters not what they say of thee. Faithful ministers are rarely eulogised by the populace or the court. Thou knowest my mind: I repeat, lose not the prince's favour."

Calderon bowed low, and withdrew. As he passed through the apartments of the palace, he crossed a gallery, in which he perceived, stationed by a window, the young prince and his own arch foe, the Duke d'Uzeda. At the same instant, from an opposite door, entered the Cardinal Duke de Lerma; and the same unwelcome conjunction of hostile planets smote the eyes of that intriguing minister. Precisely because

Uzeda was the duke's son, was he the man in the world whom the duke most dreaded and suspected?

Whoever is acquainted with the Spanish comedy will not fail to have remarked the prodigality of intrigue, and counter-intrigue, upon which its interest is made to depend. In this, the Spanish comedy was the faithful mirror of the Spanish life, especially in the circles of a court. Men lived in a perfect labyrinth of plot and counter-plot. The spirit of finesse, manœuvre, subtlety, and double-dealing, pervaded every family. Not a house that was not divided against itself!

As Lerma turned his eyes from the unwelcome spectacle of such sudden familiarity between Uzeda and the heir apparent — a familiarity which it had been his chief care to guard against — his glance fell on Calderon. He beckoned to him in silence, and retired, unobserved by the two confabulators, through the same door by which he had entered. Calderon took the hint, and followed him. The duke entered a small room, and carefully closed the door.

“How is this, Calderon?” he asked; but in a timid tone, for the weak old man stood in awe of his favourite. “Whence this new and most ill-boding league?”

“I know not, your eminence; remember that I am but just returned to Madrid; it amazes me, no less than it does your excellency.

“Learn the cause of it, my good Calderon: the prince ever professed to hate Uzeda. Restore him to those feelings: thou art all in all with his highness! If Uzeda once gain his ear, thou art lost.”

"Not so," cried Calderon, proudly. "My service is to the king; I have a right to his royal protection, for I have a claim on his royal gratitude."

"Do not deceive thyself," said the duke, in a whisper. "The king cannot live long: I have it from the best authority, his physician; nor is this all — a formidable conspiracy against thee exists at court. But for myself and the king's confessor, Philip would consent to thy ruin. The strong hold thou hast over him is in thy influence with the Infant — an influence which he knows to be exerted on behalf of his own fearful and jealous policy; that influence gone, neither I nor Aliaga could suffice to protect thee. Enough! Shut every access to Philip's heart against Uzeda."

Calderon bowed in silence, and the duke hastened to the royal cabinet.

"What a fool was I to think that I could still wear a conscience!" muttered Calderon, with a sneering lip; "but, Uzeda, I will baffle thee yet."

The next morning, the Marquis de Siete Iglesias presented himself at the levee of the Prince of Spain.

Around the favourite, as his proud stature towered above the rest, flocked the obsequious grandees. The haughty smile was yet on his lip, when the door opened, and the prince entered. The crowd, in parting suddenly, left Calderon immediately in front of Philip; who, after gazing on him sternly for a moment, turned away, with marked discourtesy, from the favourite's profound reverence, and began a low and smiling conversation with Gonsalez de Leon, one of Calderon's open foes.

The crowd exchanged looks of delight and surprise; and each of the nobles, before so wooing in their civilities to the minister, edged cautiously away.

His mortification had but begun. Presently Uzeda, hitherto almost a stranger to those apartments, appeared; the prince hastened to him; and, in a few minutes, the duke was seen following the prince into his private chamber. The sun of Calderon's favour seemed set. So thought the courtiers: not so the haughty favourite. There was even a smile of triumph on his lip — a sanguine flush upon his pale cheek, as he turned unheeding from the throng, and then, entering his carriage, regained his home.

He had scarcely re-entered his cabinet, ere, faithful to his appointment, Fonseca was announced.

"What tidings, my best of friends?" exclaimed the soldier.

Calderon shook his head mournfully.

"My dear pupil," said he, in accents of well-affected sympathy, "there is no hope for thee. Forget this vain dream — return to the army. I can promise thee promotion, rank, honours; but the hand of Beatriz is beyond my power."

"How?" said Fonseca, turning pale, and sinking into a seat. "How is this? why so sudden a change? has the queen —"

"I have not seen her majesty; but the king is resolved upon this matter: so are the inquisition. The church complains of recent and numerous examples of unholy and impolitic relaxation of her dread power. The court dare not interfere. The novice must be left to her own choice.

“And is there no hope?”

“None! Return to the excitement of thy brave career.”

“Never!” cried Fonseca, with great vehemence. “If, in requital of all my services — of life risked, blood spilt, I cannot obtain a boon so easy to accord me, I renounce a service in which even fame has lost its charm. And hark you, Calderon, I tell you that I will *not* forego this pursuit. So fair, so innocent a victim shall not be condemned to that living tomb. Through the walls of the nunnery, through the spies of the inquisition, love will find out its way; and in some distant land I will yet unite happiness and honour. I fear not exile; I fear not reserve; I no longer fear poverty itself. All lands, where the sound of the trumpet is not unknown, can afford career to the soldier, who asks from Heaven no other boon but his mistress and his sword.”

“You will seek to abstract Beatriz, then?” said Calderon, calmly and musingly. “Yes — it may be your best course, if you take the requisite precautions. But, can you see her; can you concert with her?”

“I think so. I trust I have already paved the way to an interview. Yesterday, after I quitted thee, I sought the convent; and, as the chapel is one of the public sights of the city, I made my curiosity my excuse. Happily, I recognised in the porter of the convent an old servitor of my father’s; he had known me from a child — he dislikes his calling — he will consent to accompany our flight, to share our fortunes: he has promised to convey a letter from me to Beatriz, and to transmit to me her answer.”

"The stars smile on thee, Don Martin. When thou hast learned more, consult with me again. *Now* I see a way to assist thee."

CHAPTER VI.

W e b u p o n w e b.

THE next day, to the discomfiture of the courtiers, Calderon and the Infant of Spain were seen together, publicly, on the parade; and the secretary made one of the favoured few who attended the prince at the theatre. His favour was greater, his power more dazzling, than ever it had been known before. No cause for the breach and reconciliation being known, some attributed it to caprice, others to the wily design of the astute Calderon for the humiliation of Uzeda, who seemed only to have been admitted to one smile from the rising sun, in order more signally to be reconsigned to the shade.

Meanwhile, Fonseca prospered almost beyond his hopes. Young, ardent, sanguine, the poor novice had fled from her quiet home, and the indulgence of her free thoughts, to the chill solitude of the cloister, little dreaming of the extent of the change. With a heart that overflowed with the warm thoughts of love and youth, the ghostlike shapes that flitted round her; the icy forms, the rigid ceremonials of that life, which is but the mimicry of death, appalled and shocked her. That she had preserved against a royal and most peril-

ous, because unscrupulous suitor, her fidelity to the absent Fonseca, was her sole consolation.

Another circumstance had combined with the loss of her protectress, and the absence of Don Martin, to sadden her heart, and dispose her to the cloister. On the deathbed of the old woman, who had been to her as a mother, she had learned a secret hitherto concealed from her tender youth. Dark and tragic were the influences of the star which had shone upon her birth; gloomy the heritage of memories associated with her parentage. A letter, of which she now became the guardian and treasurer — a letter in her mother's hand — woke tears more deep and bitter than she had ever shed for herself. In that letter, she read the strength and the fidelity, the sorrow and the gloom, of woman's love; and a dreary foreboding told her that the shadow of the mother's fate was cast over the child's. Such were the thoughts that had made the cloister welcome, till the desolation of the shelter was tried and known. But when, through the agency of the porter, Fonseca's letter reached her, all other feelings gave way to the burst of natural and passionate emotion. The absent had returned, again wooed, was still faithful. The awful vow was not spoken — she might yet be his. She answered; she chided; she spoke of doubt, of peril, of fear for him, of maiden shame; but her affection coloured every word, and the letter was full of hope. The correspondence continued; the energetic remonstrances of Fonseca, the pure and fervent attachment of the novice, led more and more rapidly and surely to the inevitable result. Beatriz yielded to the prayer of her lover; she consented to the scheme of escape and flight that he proposed.

Late at evening Fonseca sought Calderon. The marquis was in the gardens of his splendid mansion.

The moonlight streamed over many a row of orange-trees and pomegranates—many a white and richly sculptured vase, on its marble pedestal — many a fountain, that scattered its low music round the breathless air. Upon a terrace that commanded a stately view of the spires and palaces of Madrid, stood Calderon alone; beside him, one solitary and gigantic aloe cast its deep gloom of shade; and his motionless attitude, his folded arms, his face partially lifted to the starlit heavens, bespoke the earnestness and concentration of his thoughts.

“Why does this shudder come over me?” said he, half aloud. “It was thus in that dismal hour which preceded the knowledge of my shame — the deed a dark revenge — the revolution of my eventful and wondrous life! Ah! how happy was I once! a contented and tranquil student; a believer in those eyes that were to me as the stars to the astrologer. But the golden age passed into that of iron. And now,” added Calderon, with a self-mocking sneer, “comes the era which the poets have not chronicled; for fraud, and hypocrisy, and vice, know no poets!”

The quick step of Fonseca interrupted the courtier's reverie. He turned, knit his brow, and sighed heavily, as if nerving himself to some effort; but his brow was smooth, and his aspect cheerful, ere Fonseca reached his side.

“Give me joy, give me joy, dear Calderon! she has consented. Now, then, your promised aid.”

“You can depend upon the fidelity of your friendly porter?”

"With my life."

"A master key to the back-door of the chapel has been made?"

"See, I have it."

"And Beatriz can contrive to secrete herself in the confessional at the hour of the night prayers?"

"There is no doubt of her doing so with safety. The number of the novices is so great, that one of them cannot well be missed."

"So much, then, for your part of the enterprise. Now for mine. You know that solitary house in the suburbs, on the high road to Fuencarral, which I pointed out to you yesterday? Well, the owner is a creature of mine. There, horses shall be in waiting; there, disguises shall be prepared. Beatriz must necessarily divest herself of the professional dress; you had better choose meaner garments for yourself. Drop those hidalgo titles of which your father is so proud, and pass off yourself and the novice as a notary and his wife, about to visit France on a lawsuit of inheritance. One of my secretaries shall provide you with a pass. Meanwhile, to-morrow, I shall be the first officially to hear of the flight of the novice; and I will set the pursuers on a wrong scent. Have I not arranged all things properly, my Fonseca?"

"You are our guardian angel!" cried Don Martin, fervently. "The prayers of Beatriz will be registered in your behalf above — prayers that will reach the Great Throne as easily from the open valleys of France as in the gloomy cloisters of Madrid. At midnight, to-morrow, then, we seek the house you have described to us."

"Ay, at midnight, all shall be prepared."

With a light step and exulting heart, Fonseca turned from the palace of Calderon. Naturally sanguine and high-spirited, visions of hope and joy floated before his eyes; and the future seemed to him a land owning but the twin deities of Glory and Love.

He had reached about the centre of the street in which Calderon's abode was placed, when six men, who for some moments had been watching him from a little distance, approached.

"I believe," said the one who appeared the chief of the band, "that I have the honour to address Señor Don Martin Fonseca?"

"Such is my name."

"In the name of the king, we arrest you. Follow us."

"Arrest! on what plea? what is my offence?"

"It is stated on this writ, signed by his eminence the Cardinal Duke de Lerma. You are charged with the crime of desertion."

"Thou liest, knave! I had the general's free permission to quit the camp."

"We have said all — follow."

Fonseca, naturally of the most impetuous and passionate character, was not, in that moment, in a mood to calculate coldly all the consequences of resistance. Arrest — imprisonment — on the eve before that which was to see him the deliverer of Beatriz, constituted a sentence of such despair, that all other considerations vanished before it. He set his teeth firmly, drew his sword, dashed aside the alguazil who attempted to obstruct his path, and strode grimly on, shaking one clenched hand in defiance, while, with the other, he waved the good toledo that had often blazed in the van of battle, at the war-cry of "St. Jago and Spain!"

The alguazils closed around the soldier, and the clash of swords was already heard; when, suddenly, torches, borne on high, threw their glare across the moonlit street, and two running footmen called out, "Make way for the most noble the Marquis de Siete Iglesias!" At that name Fonseca dropped the point of his weapon; the alguazils themselves drew aside; and the tall figure and pale countenance of Calderon were visible amongst the group.

"What means this brawl, in the open streets, at this late hour?" said the minister, sternly.

"Calderon!" exclaimed Fonseca: "this is, indeed, fortunate. These caitiffs have dared to lay hands on a soldier of Spain, and to forge for their villany the name of his own kinsman, the Duke de Lerma."

"Your charge against this gentleman?" asked Calderon, calmly, turning to the principal alguazil, who placed the writ of arrest in the secretary's hand. Calderon read it leisurely, and raised his hat as he returned it to the alguazil: he then drew aside Fonseca.

"Are you mad?" said he, in a whisper. "Do you think you can resist the law? Had I not arrived so opportunely, you would have converted a slight accusation into a capital offence. Go with these men: do not fear; I will see the duke, and obtain your immediate release. To-morrow, I will visit and accompany you home."

Fonseca, still half beside himself with rage, would have replied, but Calderon significantly placed his finger on his lip, and turned to the alguazils; —

"There is a mistake here: it will be rectified to-morrow. Treat this cavalier with all the respect and worship due to his birth and merits. Go, Don Martin, go," he added, in a lower voice; "go, unless you desire to

lose Beatriz for ever. Nothing but obedience can save you from the imprisonment of half a life!"

Awed and subdued by this threat, Fonseca, in gloomy silence, placed his sword in its sheath, and sullenly followed the alguazils. Calderon watched them depart with a thoughtful and absent look; then, starting from his reverie, he bade his torchbearers proceed, and resumed his way to the Prince of Spain.

CHAPTER VII.

The open countenance, the concealed thoughts.

THE next day, at noon, Calderon visited Fonseca in his place of confinement. The young man was seated by a window that overlooked a large dull court-yard, with a neglected and broken fountain in the centre, leaning his cheek upon his hand. His long hair was dishevelled, his dress disordered, and a gloomy frown darkened features naturally open and ingenuous. He started to his feet as Calderon approached.

"My release — you have brought my release — let us forth!"

"My dear pupil, be ruled, be calm. I have seen the duke; the cause of your imprisonment is as I suspected. Some imprudent words, overheard, perhaps, but by your valet, have escaped you; words intimating your resolution not to abandon Beatriz. You know your kinsman, a man of doubts and fears, of forms, ceremonies, and scruples. From very affection for his kindred and yourself, he has contrived your arrest; all my expostulations

have been in vain. I fear your imprisonment may continue, either until you give a solemn promise to renounce all endeavour to dissuade Beatriz from the final vows, or until she herself has pronounced them."

Fonseca, as if stupified, stared a moment at Calderon, and then burst into a wild laugh. Calderon continued, —

"Nevertheless, do not despair. Be patient; I am ever about the duke; nay, I have the courage, in your cause, to appeal even to the king himself."

"And to-night she expects me — to-night she was to be free!"

"We can convey the intelligence of your mischance to her: the porter will befriend you."

"Away, false friend, or powerless protector, that you are! Are your promises of aid come to this? But I care not; my case, my wrongs, shall be laid before the king; I will inquire if it be thus that Philip the Third treats the defenders of his crown? Don Roderigo Calderon, will you place my memorial in the hands of your royal master? Do this, and I will thank you."

"No, Fonseca, I will not ruin you; the king would pass your memorial to the Duke de Lerma. Tush, this is not the way that men of sense deal with misfortune. Think you I should be what I now am, if, in every reverse, I had raved, and not reflected? Sit down, and let us think of what can now be done."

"Nothing, unless the prison-door open by sunset!"

"Stay, a thought strikes me. The term of your imprisonment ceases when you relinquish the hope of Beatriz. But what if the duke could believe that Beatriz relinquished *you*? What, for instance, if she fled from the convent, as you proposed, and we could persuade the duke that it was with another?"

"Ah, be silent!"

"Nay, what advantages in this scheme — what safety! If she fly alone, or, as supposed, with another lover, the duke will have no interest in pursuit, in punishment. She is not of that birth that the state will take the trouble, very actively, to interfere: she may reach France in safety; ay, a thousand times more safely than if she fled with you, a hidalgo and a man of rank, whom the state would have an interest to reclaim, and to whom the inquisition, hating the nobles, would impute the crime of sacrilege. It is an excellent thought! Your imprisonment may be the salvation of you both; your plan may succeed still better without your intervention; and, after a few days, the duke, believing that your resentment must necessarily replace your love, will order your release; you can join Beatriz on the frontier, and escape with her to France."

"But," said Fonseca, struck, but not convinced, by the suggestion of Calderon, "who will take my place with Beatriz? who penetrate into the gardens? who bear her from the convent?"

"That, for your sake, will I do. Perhaps," added Calderon, smiling, "a courtier may manage such an intrigue with even more dexterity than a soldier. I will bear her to the house we spoke of; there I know she can lie hid in safety, till the languid pursuit of uninterested officials shall cease, and thence I can easily find means to transport her, under safe and honourable escort, to any place it may please you to appoint."

"And think you Beatriz will fly with you, a stranger? Impossible! Your plan pleases me not."

"Nor does it please me," said Calderon, coldly; "the risks I proposed to run are too imminent to be contem-

plated complacently : I thank you for releasing me from my offer ; nor should I have made it, Fonseca, but from this fear, — what if to-morrow the duke himself (he is a churchman, remember,) see the novice ? what if he terrify her with threats against yourself ? what if he induce the abbess and the church to abridge the noviciate ? what if Beatriz be compelled or awed into taking the veil ? what if you be released even next week, and find her lost to you for ever ?”

“They cannot — they dare not !”

“The duke dares all things for ambition ; your alliance with Beatriz he would hold a disgrace to his house. Think not my warnings are without foundation — I speak from authority ; such is the course the Duke de Lerma *has* resolved upon. Nothing else could have induced me to offer to brave for your sake all the hazard of outraging the law, and braving the terrors of the inquisition. But let us think of some other plan. Is your escape possible ? I fear not. No ; you must trust to my chance of persuading the duke into prosecuting the matter no further ; trust to some mightier scheme engrossing all his thoughts ; to a fit of good-humour after his siesta ; or, perhaps, an attack of the gout, or a stroke of apoplexy. Such, after all, are the chances of human felicity, the pivots on which turns the solemn wheel of human life !”

Fonseca made no reply for some moments ; he traversed the room with hasty and disordered strides, and at last stopped abruptly.

“Calderon, there is no option ; I must throw myself on your generosity, your faith, your friendship. I will write to Beatriz ; I will tell her, for my sake, to confide in you.”

As he spoke, Don Martin turned to the table, and wrote a hasty and impassioned note, in which he implored the novice to trust herself to the directions of Don Roderigo Calderon, his best, his only friend; and, as he placed this letter in the hands of the courtier, he turned aside to conceal his emotions. Calderon himself was deeply moved: his cheek was flushed, and his hand seemed tremulous as it took the letter.

"Remember," said Fonseca, "that I trust to you my life of life. As you are true to me, may Heaven be merciful to you!"

Calderon made no answer, but turned to the door.

"Stay," said Fonseca; "I had forgot this — here is the master key."

"True; how dull I was! And the porter — will he attend to thy proxy?"

"Doubt it not. Accost him with the word, 'Grenada,' — But he expects to share the flight."

"That can be arranged. To-morrow you will hear of my success. Farewell!"

CHAPTER VIII.

The escape.

It was midnight, in the chapel of the convent.

The moonlight shone with exceeding lustre through the tall casements, and lit into a ghastly semblance of life the marble images of saint and martyr, that threw their long shadows over the consecrated floor. Nothing could well be conceived more dreary, solemn, and sepulchral, than that holy place: its distained and time-hallowed walls; the impenetrable mass of darkness that gathered into those recesses which the moonlight failed to reach; its antique and massive tombs, above which reclined the sculptured effigies of some departed patroness or abbess, who had exchanged a living grave for the Mansions of the Blest. But there — oh, wonderful human heart! — even there, in that spot, the very homily and warning against earthly affections, and mortal hopes — even there, couldst thou beat with as wild, as bright, and as pure a passion as ever heaved the breast, and shone in the eyes of Beauty, in the free air that ripples the Guadiana, or amidst the twilight dance of Castilian maids!

A tall figure, wrapped from head to foot in a cloak, passed slowly up the aisle. But light and cautious though the footstep, it woke a low, hollow, ominous echo, that seemed more than the step itself to disturb the sanctity of the place. It paused opposite to a con-

fessional, which was but dimly visible through the shadows around it. And then there emerged timidly a female form; and a soft voice whispered — “It is thou, Fonseca!”

“Hist!” was the answer; “he waits without. Be quick; speak not — come.”

Beatriz recoiled in surprise and alarm at the voice of a stranger; but the man, seizing her by the hand, drew her hastily from the chapel, and hurried her across the garden, through a small postern door, which stood ajar, into an obscure street, bordering the convent walls. Here stood the expectant porter, with a bundle in his hand, which he opened, and took thence a long cloak, such as the women of middling rank in Madrid wore in the winter season, with the customary mantilla or veil. With these, still without speaking, the stranger hastily shrouded the form of the novice, and once more hurried her on, till, about a hundred yards from the garden gate, he came to a carriage, into which he lifted Beatriz, whispered a few words to the porter, seated himself by the side of the novice, and the vehicle drove rapidly away.

It was some moments before Beatriz could sufficiently recover from her first agitation and terror, to feel alive to all the strangeness of her situation. — She was alone with a stranger — where was Fonseca? She turned suddenly towards her companion.

“Who art thou?” she said; “whither art thou leading me — and why —”

“Why is not Don Martin by thy side? Pardon me, señora: I have a billet for thee from Fonseca; in a few minutes thou wilt know all.”

At this time the vehicle came suddenly in the midst of a train of footmen and equipages, that choked up the way. There was a brilliant entertainment at the French embassy, and thither flocked all the rank and chivalry of Madrid. Calderon drew down the blinds, and hastily enjoined silence on Beatriz. It was some minutes before the driver extricated himself from the throng; and then, as if to make amends for the delay, he put his horses to their full speed, and carefully selected the most obscure and solitary thoroughfares. At length the carriage entered the range of suburbs, which still, at this day, the traveller passes on his road from Madrid to France. The horses stopped before a lonely house, that stood a little apart from the road, and which, from the fashion of its architecture, appeared of considerable antiquity. The stranger descended, and knocked twice at the door: it was opened by an old man, whose exaggerated features, bended frame, and long beard, proclaimed him of the race of Israel. After a short and whispered parley, the stranger returned to Beatriz, gravely assisted her from the carriage, and, leading her across the threshold, and up a flight of rude stairs, dimly lighted, entered a chamber richly furnished. The walls were hung with stuffs of gorgeous colouring and elaborate design. Pedestals of the whitest marble, placed at each corner of the room, supported candelabra of silver. The sofas and couches were of the heavy, but sumptuous fashion which then prevailed in the palaces of France and Spain; and of which Venice (the true model of the barbaric decorations with which Louis the Fourteenth corrupted the taste of Paris) was probably the original inventor. In an alcove, beneath a silken canopy, was prepared a table, laden with wines, fruits,

and viands; and, altogether, the elegance and luxury that characterised the apartment were in strong and strange contrast with the half-ruined exterior of the abode, the gloomy and rude approach to the chamber, and the mean and servile aspect of the Jew, who stood, or rather cowered, by the door, as if waiting for further orders. With a wave of the hand, the stranger dismissed the Israelite; and then, approaching Beatritz, presented to her Fonseca's letter.

As, with an enchanting mixture of modesty and eagerness, Beatriz, half averting her face, bent over the well-known characters, Calderon gazed upon her with a scrutinising and curious eye.

The courtier was not, in this instance, altogether the villain that from outward appearances the reader may have deemed him. His plan was this: he had resolved on compliance with the wishes of the prince — his safety rested on that compliance. But Fonseca was not to be sacrificed without reserve. Profoundly despising womankind, and firmly persuaded of their constitutional treachery and deceit, Calderon could not believe the actress that angel of light and purity which she seemed to the enamoured Fonseca. He had resolved to subject her to the ordeal of the prince's addresses. If she fell, should he not save his friend from being the dupe of an artful *intriguante*? — should he not deserve the thanks of Don Martin, for the very temptation to which Beatriz was now to be submitted? If he could convince Fonseca of her falsehood, he should stand acquitted to his friend, while he should have secured his interest with the prince. But if, on the other hand, Beatriz came spotless through the trial; if the prince, stung by her obstinate virtue, should menace

to sink courtship into violence, Calderon knew that it would not be in the first or second interview that the novice would have any real danger to apprehend; and he should have leisure to concert her escape by such means as would completely conceal from the prince his own connivance at her flight. Such was the compromise that Calderon had effected between his conscience and his ambition. But, while he gazed upon the novice, though her features were turned from him, and half veiled by the head-dress she had assumed, strange feelings, ominous and startling, like those remembrances of the Past which sometimes come in the guise of prophecies of the Future, thronged, indistinct and dim, upon his breast. The unconscious and exquisite grace of her form, its touching youth, an air of innocence diffused around it, a something, helpless and pleading to man's protection, in the very slightness of her beautiful but fairy-like proportions, seemed to reproach his treachery, and to awaken whatever of pity or human softness remained in his heart.

The novice had read the letter; and, turning, in the impulse of surprise and alarm, to Calderon for explanation, for the first time she remarked his features and his aspect; for he had then laid aside his cloak, and the broad Spanish hat, with its heavy plume. It was thus that their eyes met, and, as they did so, Beatriz starting from her seat, uttered a wild cry —

“And thy name is Calderon — Don Roderigo Calderon! — is it possible? Hadst thou never another name?” she exclaimed; and, as she spoke, she approached him slowly and fearfully.

“Lady, Calderon is my name,” replied the marquis; but his voice faltered. “But thine — thine — is it, in truth, Beatriz Coello?”

Beatriz made no reply, but continued to advance, till her very breath came upon his cheek: she then laid her hand upon his arm, and looked up into his face with a gaze so earnest, so intent, so prolonged, that Calderon, but for a strange and terrible thought — half of wonder, half of suspicion, which had gradually crept into his soul, and now usurped it — might have doubted whether the reason of the poor novice was not unsettled.

Slowly Beatriz withdrew her eyes, and they fell upon a large mirror opposite, which reflected in full light the features of Calderon and herself. It was then — her natural bloom having faded into a paleness scarcely less statue-like than that which characterised the cheek of Calderon himself, and all the sweet play and mobility of feature that belong to first youth being replaced by a rigid and marble stillness of expression — it was then that a remarkable resemblance between those two persons became visible and startling. That resemblance struck alike, and in the same instant, both Beatriz and Calderon; and both, gazing on the mirror, uttered an involuntary and simultaneous exclamation.

With a trembling and hasty hand the novice searched amidst the folds of her robe, and drew forth a small leathern case, closed with clasps of silver. She touched the spring, and took out a miniature, upon which she cast a rapid and wild glance; then, lifting her eyes to Calderon, she cried, — “It must be so — it is, it is my father!” and fell motionless at his feet.

Calderon did not for some moments heed the condition of the novice; that chamber, the meditated victim, the present time, the coming evil — all were swept away from his soul; he was transported back into the past, with the two dread Spirits, Memory and Conscience! His knees knocked together, his aspect was livid, the cold drops stood upon his brow; he muttered incoherently, and then bent down, and took up the picture. It was the face of a man in the plain garb of a Salamanca student, and in the first flush of youth: the noble brow, serene and calm, and stamped alike with candour and courage; the smooth cheek, rich with the hues of health; the lips, parting in a happy smile, and eloquent of joy and hope: it was the face of that wily, grasping, ambitious, unscrupulous man, when life had yet brought no sin; it was, as if the ghost of youth were come back to accuse the crimes of manhood! The miniature fell from his hand — he groaned aloud. Then, gazing on the prostrate form of the novice, he said, — “Poor wretch! can I believe that thou art indeed of mine own race and blood; or, rather, does not nature, that stamped these lineaments on thy countenance, deceive and mock me? If she, thy mother, lied, why not nature herself?”

He raised the novice in his arms, and gazed long and wistfully upon her lifeless, but most lovely features. She moved not — she scarcely seemed to breathe; yet he fancied he felt her embrace tightening round him — he fancied he heard again the voice that had hailed him “FATHER!” His heart beat aloud, the divine instinct overpowered all things, he pressed a passionate kiss upon her forehead, and his tears fell fast and warm upon her cheek. But again the dark

remembrance crossed him, and he shuddered, placed the novice hastily on one of the couches, and shouted aloud.

The Jew appeared, and was ordered to summon Jacinta. A young woman of the same persuasion, and of harsh and forbidding exterior, entered, and to her care Calderon briefly consigned the yet insensible Beatriz.

While Jacinta unlaced the dress, and chafed the temples, of the novice, Calderon seemed buried in gloomy thought. At last he strode slowly away, as if to quit the chamber, when his foot struck against the case of the picture, and his eye rested upon a scroll which lay therein, folded and embedded. He took it up, and, lifting aside the hangings, hurried into a small cabinet, lighted by a single lamp. Here, alone and unseen, Calderon read the following letter: —

“TO RODERIGO NUNEZ.

“Will this letter ever meet thine eyes? I know not; but it is comfort to write to thee on the bed of dead; and, were it not for that horrible and haunting thought, that thou believest me — me, whose very life was in thy love — faithless and dishonoured, even death itself would be the sweeter, because it comes from the loss of thee. Yes, something tells me that these lines will not be written in vain; that thou wilt read them yet, when this hand is still, and this brain at rest, and that then thou wilt feel that I could not have dared to write to thee if I were not innocent; that in every word thou wilt recognise the evidence, that is strong as the voice of thousands, — the simple but solemn evidence of faith and truth. What! when for thee I deserted all — home, and a father's love, wealth, and the name I had inherited from Moors,

who had been monarchs in their day — couldst thou think that I had not made the love of thee the core, and life, and principle of my very being? And one short year, could that suffice to shake my faith? — one year of marriage, but two months of absence? You left me, left that dear home, by the silver Xenil. For love did not suffice to you; ambition began to stir within you, and you called it 'love.' You said, 'It grieved you that *I* was poor; that you could not restore to me the luxury and wealth I had lost.' (Alas! why did you turn so incredulously from my assurance, that in you, and you alone, were centred my ambition and pride?) You declared that the vain readers of the stars had foretold, at your cradle, that you were predestined to lofty honours and dazzling power, and that the prophecy would work out its own fulfilment. You left me to seek, in Madrid, your relation, who had risen into the favour of a minister, and from whose love you expected to gain an opening to your career. Do you remember how we parted, how you kissed away my tears, and how they gushed forth again — how again, and again, you said! 'farewell!' and again and again returned, as if we could never part! And I took my babe, but a few weeks born, from her cradle, and placed her in thy arms, and bade thee see that she had already learned thy smile; and were these the signs of falsehood? Oh, how I pined for the sound of thy footstep when thou wert gone! how all the summer had vanished from the landscape; and how, turning to thy child, I fancied I again beheld thee! The day after thou hadst left me, there was a knock at the door of the cottage; the nurse opened it, and there entered your former rival, whom my father had sought to force upon me, the

richest of the descendants of the Moor, Arraez Ferrares. Why linger on this hateful subject? He had tracked us to our home, he had learned thy absence, he came to insult me with his vows. By the Blessed Mother, whom thou hast taught me to adore, by the terror and pang of death, by my hopes of heaven, I am innocent, Roderigo, I am innocent! Oh, how couldst thou be so deceived? He quitted the cottage discomfited and enraged; again he sought me, again and again; and, when the door was closed upon him, he waylaid my steps. Lone and defenceless as we were, thy wife and child, with but one attendant, I feared him not; but I trembled at thy return, for I knew that thou wert a Spaniard, a Castilian, and that beneath thy calm and gentle seeming lurked pride, and jealousy, and revenge. Thy letter came, the only letter since thy absence, the last letter from thee I may ever weep over, and lay upon my heart. Thy relation was dead, and his wealth enriched a nearer heir. Thou wert to return. The day in which I might expect thee approached — it arrived. During the last week I had seen and heard no more of Ferrares. I trusted that he had, at length, discovered the vanity of his pursuit. I walked into the valley, thy child in my arms, to meet thee; but thou didst not come. The sun set, and the light of thine eyes replaced not the declining day. I returned home, and watched for thee all night; but in vain. The next morning, again, I went forth into the valley, and again, with a sick heart, returned to my desolate home. It was then noon. As I approached the door I perceived Ferrares. He forced his entrance. I told him of thy expected return, and threatened him with thy resentment. He

left me; and, terrified with a thousand vague forebodings, I sat down to weep. The nurse, Leonarda, was watching by the cradle of our child, in the inner room. I was alone. Suddenly the door opened. I heard thy step; I knew it; I knew its music. I started up. Saints of heaven! what a meeting — what a return! Pale, haggard, thine hands and garments dripping blood, thine eyes blazing with insane fire, a terrible smile of mockery on thy lip, thou stoodst before me. I would have thrown myself on thy breast; thou didst cast me from thee; I fell on my knees, and thy blade was pointed at my heart — the heart so full of thee! ‘He is dead,’ didst thou say, in a hollow voice; ‘he is dead — thy paramour — take thy bed beside him!’ I knew not what I said, but it seemed to move thee; thy hand trembled, and the point of thy weapon dropped. It was then that, hearing thy voice, Leonarda hastened into the room, and bore in her arms thy child. ‘See,’ I exclaimed, ‘see thy daughter; see, she stretches her hands to thee — she pleads for her mother!’ At that sight thy brow became dark, the demon seized upon thee again. ‘Mine!’ were thy cruel words — they ring in my ear still — ‘no! she was born before the time — ha! ha! — thou didst betray me from the first!’ With that thou didst raise thy sword; but, even then (ah, blessed thought! even then) remorse and love palsied thy hand, and averted thy gaze: the blow was not that of death. I fell, senseless, to the ground, and, when I recovered, thou wert gone. Delirium succeeded; and, when once more my senses and reason returned to me, I found by my side a holy priest, and from him, gradually, I learned all that till then was dark. Ferrares had been found

in the valley, weltering in his blood. Borne to a neighbouring monastery, he lingered a few days, to confess the treachery he had practised on thee; to adopt, in his last hours, the Christian faith; and to attest his crime with his own signature. He enjoined the monk, who had converted and confessed him, to place his proof of my innocence in my hands. Behold it enclosed within. If this letter ever reach thee, thou wilt learn how thy wife was true to thee in life, and has, therefore, the right to bless thee in death."

At this passage Calderon dropped the letter, and was seized with a kind of paralysis, which, for some moments, seemed to deprive him of life itself. When he recovered, he eagerly grasped a scroll that was enclosed in the letter, but which, hitherto, he had disregarded. Even then, so strong were his emotions, that sight itself was obscured and dimmed, and it was long before he could read the characters, which were already discoloured by time.

"TO INEZ.

"I have but a few hours to live, — let me spend them in atonement and in prayer, less for myself than thee. Thou knowest not how madly I adored thee; and how thy hatred or indifference stung every passion into torture. Let this pass. When I saw thee again — the forsaker of thy faith — poor, obscure, and doomed to a peasant's lot — daring hopes shaped themselves into fierce resolves. Finding that thou wert inexorable, I turned my arts upon thy husband. I knew his poverty and his ambition: we Moors have had ample knowledge of the avarice of the Christians! I bade one whom I could trust seek him out at Madrid. Wealth — lavish wealth, — wealth, that could

open to a Spaniard all the gates of power, was offered to him if he would renounce thee for ever. Nay, in order to crush out all love from his breast, it was told him that mine was the prior right — that thou hadst yielded to my suit ere thou didst fly with him — that thou didst use his love as an escape from thine own dishonour — that thy very child owned another father. I had learned, and I availed myself of the knowledge, that it was born before its time. We had miscalculated the effect of this representation, backed and supported by forged letters: instead of abandoning thee, he thought only of revenge for his shame. As I left thy house, the last time I gazed upon thy indignant eyes, I found the avenger on my path! He had seen me quit thy roof — he needed no other confirmation of the tale. I fell into the pit which I had digged for thee. Conscience unnerved my hand and blunted my sword: our blades scarcely crossed before his weapon stretched me on the ground. They tell me he has fled from the anger of the law; let him return without a fear. Solemnly, and from the bed of death, and in the sight of the last tribunal, I proclaim to justice and the world that we fought fairly, and I perish justly. I have adopted thy faith, though I cannot comprehend its mysteries. It is enough that it holds out to me the only hope that we shall meet again. I direct these lines to be transmitted to thee — an eternal proof of thy innocence and my guilt. Ah, canst thou forgive me? I knew no sin till I knew thee.

“ARRAEZ FERRARES.”

Calderon paused ere he turned to the concluding lines of his wife's letter; and, though he remained

motionless and speechless, never were agony and despair stamped more terribly on the face of man.

CONCLUSION OF THE LETTER OF INEZ.

“And what avails to me this testimony of my faith? Thou art fled; they cannot track thy footsteps; I shall see thee no more on earth. I am dying fast, but not of the wound I took from thee; let not that thought darken thy soul, my husband! No, that wound is healed. Thought is sharper than the sword. — I have pined away for the loss of thee, and thy love! Can the shadow live without the sun? And wilt thou never place thy hands on my daughter’s head, and bless her for her mother’s sake? Ah, yes — yes! The saints that watch over our human destinies will one day cast her in thy way; and the same hour that gives thee a daughter shall redeem and hollow the memory of a wife Leonarda has vowed to be a mother to our child; to tend her, work for her, rear her, though in poverty, to virtue. I consign these letters to Leonarda’s charge, with thy picture — never to be removed from my breast till the heart within has ceased to beat. Not till Beatriz (I have so baptised her — it was thy mother’s name!) has attained to the age when reason can wrestle with the knowledge of sorrow, shall her years be shadowed with the knowledge of our fate. Leonarda has persuaded me that Beatriz shall not take thy name of Nunez. Our tale has excited horror — for it is not understood — and thou art called the murderer of thy wife; and the story of our misfortunes would cling to our daughter’s life, and reach her ears, and, perhaps, mar her fate. But I know that thou wilt discover her not the less, for Nature has a providence of its own. When at last

you meet her, protect, guard, love her — sacred to you as she is, and shall be — the pure but mournful legacy of love and death. I have done: I die blessing thee!

“INEZ.”

Scarce had he finished these last words, ere the clock struck: it was the hour in which the prince was to arrive. The thought restored Calderon to the sense of the present time — the approaching peril. All the cold calculations he had formed for the stranger-novice, vanished now. He kissed the letter passionately, placed it in his breast, and hurried into the chamber where he had left his child. Our tale returns to Fonseca.

CHAPTER IX.

The counterplot.

CALDERON had not long left the young soldier, before the governor of the prison entered, to pay his respects to a captive of such high birth and military reputation.

Fonseca, always blunt and impatient of mood, was not in a humour to receive and return compliments; but the governor had scarcely seated himself, ere he struck a chord in the conversation which immediately arrested the attention and engaged the interest of the prisoner.

“Do not fear, sir,” said he, “that you will be long detained; the power of your enemy is great, but it will not be of duration. The storm is already gather-

ing round him: he must be more than man, if he escape the thunderbolt."

"Do you speak to me thus of my own kinsman. the Duke de Lerma?"

"No, Don Martin, pardon me. I spake of the Marquis de Siete Iglesias. Are you so great a stranger to Madrid and to the court, as to suppose that the Duke de Lerma ever signs a paper but at the instance of Don Roderigo? Nay, that he ever looks over the paper to which he sets his hand? Depend upon it, you are here to gratify the avarice or revenge of the Scourge of Spain."

"Impossible!" cried Fonseca. "Don Roderigo is my friend — my intercessor. He overwhelms me with his kindness."

"Then you are indeed lost," said the governor, in accents of compassion; "the tiger always caresses his prey before he devours it. What have you done to provoke his kindness?"

"Señor," said Fonseca, suspiciously, "you speak with a strange want of caution to a stranger, and against a man whose power you confess."

"Because I am safe from his revenge; because the Inquisition have already fixed their fatal eyes upon him; because by that Inquisition I am not unknown nor unprotected; because I see, with joy and triumph, the hour approaching that must render up to justice the pander of the prince, the betrayer of the king, the robber of the people; because I have an interest in thee, Don Martin, of which thou wilt be aware when thou hast learned my name. I am Juan de la Nuza, the father of the young officer whose life you saved in the

assault of the Moriscos, in Valencia, and I owe you an everlasting gratitude."

There was something in the frank and hearty tone of the governor, which at once won Fonseca's confidence. He became agitated and distracted with suspicions of his former tutor and present patron.

"What, I ask, hast thou done to attract his notice? Calderon is not capricious in cruelty. Art thou rich, and does he hope that thou wilt purchase freedom with five thousand pistoles? No! Hast thou crossed the path of his ambition? Hast thou been seen with Uzeda? or art thou in favour with the prince? No, again! Then, hast thou some wife, some sister, some mistress of rare accomplishment and beauty, with whom Calderon would gorge the fancy and retain the esteem of the profligate Infant? Ah, thou changest colour!"

"By heaven! you madden me with these devilish surmises! Speak plainly."

"I see thou knowest not Calderon," said the governor, with a bitter smile. "I do — for my niece was beautiful, and the prince wooed her ——. But enough of that: at his scaffold, or at the rack, I shall be avenged on Roderigo Calderon. You said the Duke of Lerma was your kinsman: you are, then, equally related to his son, the Duke d'Uzeda. Apply not to Lerma; he is the tool of Calderon. Apply yourself to Uzeda; he is Calderon's mortal foe. While Calderon gains ground with the prince, Uzeda advances with the king. Uzeda, by a word, can procure thy release. The duke knows and trusts me. Shall I be commissioned to acquaint him with thy arrest, and entreat his intercession with Philip?"

"You give me new life! But not an hour is to be lost; this night — this day — oh, Mother of Mercy! what image have you conjured up! Fly to Uzeda, if you would save my very reason. I myself have scarcely seen him since my boyhood — Lerma forbade me to seek his friendship. But I am of his race — his blood."

"Be cheered, — I shall see the duke to-day. I have business with him where you wot not. We are bringing strange events to a crisis. Hope the best."

With this the governor took his leave.

At the dusk of evening, Don Juan de la Nuza, wrapped in a dark mantle, stood before a small door, deep-set in a massive and gloomy wall, that stretched along one side of a shunned and deserted street. Without sign of living hand, the door opened at his knock, and the governor entered a long and narrow passage that conducted to chambers more associated with images of awe than any in his own prison. Here he suddenly encountered the Jesuit, Fray Louis de Aliaga, confessor to the king.

"How fares the grand inquisitor?" asked De la Nuza.

"He has just breathed his last," answered the Jesuit. "His illness — so sudden — defied all aid. Sandoval y Roxas is with the saints."

The governor, who was, as the reader may suppose, one of the sacred body, crossed himself, and answered — "With whom will rest the appointment of the successor? Who will be first to gain the ear of the king?"

"I know not," replied the Jesuit; "but I am, this instant, summoned to Uzeda. Pardon my haste."

So saying, Aliaga glided away.

"With Sandoval y Roxas," muttered Don Juan, dies the last protector of Calderon and Lerma: unless indeed

the wily marquis can persuade the king to make Aliaga, his friend, the late cardinal's successor. But Aliaga seeks Uzeda — Uzeda, his foe and rival. What can this portend?"

Thus soliloquising, the governor silently continued his way till he came to a door by which stood two men, masked, who saluted him with a mute inclination of the head. The door opened and again closed, as the governor entered.

Meanwhile, the confessor had gained the palace of the Duke d'Uzeda. Uzeda was not alone; with him was a man whose sallow complexion, ill-favoured features, and simple dress, strangely contrasted the showy person and sumptuous habiliments of the duke. But the instant this personage opened his lips, the comparison was no longer to his prejudice. Something in the sparkle of his deep-set eye — in the singular enchantment of his smile — and, above all, in the tone of a very musical and earnest voice, chained attention at once to his words. And, whatever those words, there was about the man, and his mode of thought and expression, the stamp of a mind at once crafty and commanding. This personage was Gaspar de Guzman, then but a gentleman of the Prince's Chamber (which post he owed to Calderon, whose creature he was supposed to be), afterwards so celebrated in the history of Philip IV. as Count of Olivares, and prime minister of Spain.

The conversation between Guzman and Uzeda, just before the Jesuit entered, was drawing to a close.

"You see," said Uzeda, "that if we desire to crush Calderon, it is on the Inquisition that we must depend. Now is the time to elect, in the successor of Sandoval y Roxas, one pledged to the favourite's ruin. The reason

I choose Aliaga is this, — Calderon will never suspect his friendship, and will not, therefore, thwart us with the king. The Jesuit, who would sell all Christendom for the sake of advancement to his order or himself, will gladly sell Calderon to obtain the chair of the Inquisition."

"I believe it," replied Guzman. "I approve your choice; and you may rely on me to destroy Calderon with the prince. I have found out the way to rule Philip; it is by never giving him a right to despise his favourites — it is, to flatter his vanity, but not to share his vices. Trust me, you alone — if you follow my suggestions — can be minister to the Fourth Philip."

Here a page entered to announce Don Fray Louis de Aliaga.

Uzeda advanced to the door, and received the holy man with profound respect.

"Be seated, father, and let me at once to business; for time presses, and all must be despatched to-night. Before interest is made by others with the king, we must be prompt in gaining the appointment of Sandoval's successor."

"Report says that the cardinal duke, your father, himself desires the vacant chair of the inquisition."

"My poor father! he is old — his sun is set. No, Aliaga; I have thought of one fitter for that high and stern office: in a word, that appointment rests with yourself. I can make you grand inquisitor of Spain — I."

"Me!" said the Jesuit, and he turned aside his face. "You jest with me, noble son."

"I am serious — hear me. We have been foes and rivals: why should not our path be the same? Calderon

has deprived you of friends more powerful than himself. His hour is come. The Duke de Lerma's downfall cannot be avoided; if it could, I, his son, would not, as you may suppose, withhold my land. But business fatigues him -- he is old -- the affairs of Spain are in a deplorable condition -- they need younger and abler hands. My father will not repine at a retirement suited to his years, and which shall be made honourable to his gray hairs. But some victim must glut the rage of the people; that victim must be the upstart Calderon; the means of his punishment, the inquisition. Now, you understand me. On one condition, you shall be the successor to Sandoval. Know that I do not promise without the power to fulfil. The instant I learned that the late cardinal's death was certain, I repaired to the king. I have the promise of the appointment; and this night your name shall, if you accept the condition, and Calderon does not, in the interim, see the king, and prevent the nomination, receive the royal sanction."

"Our excellent Aliaga cannot hesitate," said Don Gaspar de Guzman. "The order of Loyola rests upon shoulders that can well support the load."

Before that trio separated, the compact was completed. Aliaga practised against his friend the lesson he had preached to him -- that the end sanctifies every means. Scarce had Aliaga departed ere Juan de la Nuza entered; for Uzeda, who sought to make the inquisition his chief instrument of power, courted the friendship of all its officers. He readily promised to obtain the release of Fonseca; and, in effect, it was but little after midnight when an order arrived at the prison for the release of Don Martin Fonseca, accompanied by a note from the

duke to the prisoner, full of affectionate professions, and requesting to see him the next morning.

Late as the hour was, and in spite of the expostulations of the governor, who wished him to remain the night within the prison, in the hope to extract from him his secret, Fonseca no sooner received the order than he claimed and obtained his liberation.

CHAPTER X.

We reap what we sow.

WITH emotions of joy and triumph, such as had never yet agitated his reckless and abandoned youth, the Infant of Spain bent his way towards the lonely house on the road to Fuencarral. He descended from his carriage when about a hundred yards from the abode, and proceeded on foot to the appointed place.

The Jew opened the door to the prince with a hideous grin on his hollow cheek; and Philip hastened up the stairs, and, entering the chamber we have before described, beheld, to his inconceivable consternation and dismay, the form of Beatriz clasped in the arms of Calderon, her head leaning on his bosom; while his voice, half choked with passionate sobs, called upon her in the most endearing terms.

For a moment the prince stood spell-bound and speechless, at the threshold; then, striking the hilt of his sword fiercely, he exclaimed, "Traitor! is it thus that thou hast kept thy promise? Dost thou not tremble at my vengeance?"

"Peace! peace!" said Calderon, in an imperious, but sepulchral tone, and waving one hand with a gesture of impatience and rebuke, while with the other he removed the long clustering hair that fell over the pale face of the still insensible novice. "Peace! prince of Spain; thy voice scares back the struggling life — peace! Look up, image and relic of the lost — the murdered — the martyr! Hush! do you hear her breathe, or is she with her mother in that heaven which is closed on me? Live! live! my daughter — my child — live! For thy life in the world hereafter will *not* be mine!"

"What means this?" said the prince, falteringly. "What delusion do thy wiles practise upon me?"

Calderon made no answer; and at that instant Beatriz sighed heavily, and her eyes opened.

"My child! my child! — thou art mine! Speak — let me hear thy voice — again let it call me 'father!'"

And Calderon dropped on his knees, and, clasping his hands fervently, looked up imploringly in her face. The novice, now slowly returning to life and consciousness, strove to speak: her voice failed her, but her lips smiled upon Calderon, and her arms fell feebly but endearingly round his neck.

"Bless thee! bless thee!" exclaimed Calderon. "Bless thee in thy sweet mother's name!"

While he spoke, the eyes of Beatriz caught the form of Philip, who stood by, leaning on his sword; his face working with various passions, and his lip curling with stern and intense disdain. Accustomed to know human life but in its worst shapes, and Calderon only by his vices and his arts, the voice of nature uttered no language intelligible to the prince. He regarded the whole as some well got-up device — some trick of the stage;

and waited, with impatience and scorn, the *dénoûment* of the imposture.

At the sight of that mocking face, Beatriz shuddered, and fell back; but her very alarm revived her, and, starting to her feet, she exclaimed, "Save me from that bad man — save me! My father, I *am* safe with thee!"

"Safe!" echoed Calderon, — "ay, safe against the world. But not," he added, looking round, and in a low and muttered tone, "not in this foul abode; its very air pollutes thee. Let us hence: come — come — my daughter!" and, winding his arm round her waist, he hurried her towards the door.

"Back, traitor!" cried Philip, placing himself full in the path of the distracted and half delirious father. "Back! thinkest thou that I, thy master and thy prince, am to be thus duped, and thus insulted? Not for thine own pleasures hast thou snatched her, whom I have honoured with my love, from the sanctuary of the church. Go, if thou wilt; but Beatriz remains. This roof is sacred to my will. Back! or thy next step is on the point of my sword."

"Menace not, speak not, Philip — I am desperate. I am beside myself — I cannot parley with thee. Away! by thy hopes of heaven, away! I am no longer thy minion — thy tool. I am a father, and the protector of my child."

"Brave device — notable tale!" cried Philip, scornfully, and placing his back against the door. "The little actress plays her part well, it must be owned, — it is her trade; but thou art a bungler, my gentle Calderon."

For a moment the courtier stood, not irresolute, but overcome with the passions that shook to their centre a nature, the stormy and stern elements of which the habit

of years had rather mastered than quelled. At last, with a fierce cry, he suddenly grasped the prince by the collar of his vest; and, ere he could avail himself of his weapon, swung him aside with such violence that he lost his balance and (his foot slipping on the polished floor) fell to the ground. Calderon then opened the door, lifted Beatriz in both his arms, and fled precipitately down the stairs. He could no longer trust to chance and delay, against the dangers of that abode.

CHAPTER XI.

Howsoever the rivers wind, the ocean receives them all.

MEANWHILE Fonseca had reached the Convent; had found the porter gone; and, with a mind convulsed with apprehension and doubt, had flown on the wings of love and fear to the house indicated by Calderon. The grim and solitary mansion came just in sight — the moon streaming sadly over its gray and antique walls — when he heard his name pronounced; and the convent porter emerged from the shadow of a wall, beside which he had ensconced himself.

“Don Martin! it is thou, indeed; blessed be the saints! I began to fear — nay, I fear now, that we were deceived.”

“Speak, man, but stop me not! Speak! what horrors hast thou to utter?”

“I knew the cavalier whom thou didst send in thy place! Who knows not Roderigo Calderon? I trembled when I saw him lift the novice into the carriage; but I

thought I should, as agreed, be companion in the flight. Not so. Don Roderigo briefly told me to hide where I could, this night; and that to-morrow he would arrange preparations for my flight from Madrid. My mind misgave me, for Calderon's name is blackened by many curses. I resolved to follow the carriage. I did so; but my breath and speed nearly failed, when, fortunately, the carriage was stopped and entangled by a crowd in the street. No lackeys were behind; I mounted the foot-board unobserved, and descended and hid myself when the carriage stopped. I knew not the house, but I knew the neighbourhood — a brother of mine lives at hand. I sought my relative for a night's shelter. I learned that dark stories had given to that house an evil name. It was one of those which the Prince of Spain had consecrated to the pursuits which have dishonoured so many families in Madrid. I resolved again to go forth and watch. Scarce had I reached this very spot, when I saw a carriage approach rapidly. I secreted myself behind a buttress, and saw the carriage halt; and a man descended, and walked to the house. See there — there, by yon crossing, the carriage still waits.. The man was wrapped in a mantle. I know not whom he may be; but — —”

“Heaven!” cried Fonseca, as they were now close before the door of the house at which Calderon's carriage still stood; “I hear a noise, a shriek, within.”

Scarce had he spoken when the door opened. Voices were heard in loud altercation; presently the form of the Jew was thrown on the pavement, and, dashing aside another man, who seemed striving to detain him, Calderon appeared, — his drawn sword in his right hand, his left arm clasped around Beatriz.

Fonseca darted forward.

"My lover! my betrothed!" exclaimed the voice of the novice; "thou art come to save us — to save thy Beatriz!"

"Yes; and to chastise the betrayer!" exclaimed Fonseca, in a voice of thunder. "Leave thy victim, villain! Defend thyself!"

He made a desperate lunge at Calderon while he spoke. The marquis feebly parried the stroke.

"Hold!" he cried. "Not on me!"

"No — no!" exclaimed Beatriz, throwing herself on her father's breast. The words came too late. Binded and deafened with rage, Fonseca had again, with more sure and deadly aim, directed his weapon against his supposed foe. The blade struck home, but not to the heart of Calderon. It was Beatriz, bathed in her blood, who fell at the feet of her frenzied lover.

"Daughter and mother both!" muttered Calderon; and he fell, as if the steel had pierced his own heart, beside his child.

"Wretch! what hast thou done?" uttered a voice strange to the ear of Fonseca; a voice half stifled with horror and, perhaps, remorse. The Prince of Spain stood on the spot; and his feet were dabbled in the blood of the virgin martyr. The moonlight alone lighted that spectacle of crime and death; and the faces of all seemed ghastly beneath its beams. Beatriz turned her eyes upon her lover, with an expression of celestial compassion and divine forgiveness; then, sinking upon Calderon's breast, she muttered, —

"Pardon him! pardon him, father! I shall tell my mother that thou hast blessed me!"

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It was not for several days after that night of terror that Calderon was heard of at the court. His absence was unaccountable; for, though the flight of the novice was, of course, known, her fate was not suspected; and her rank had been too insignificant to create much interest in her escape, or much vigilance in pursuit. But of that absence the courtier's enemies well availed themselves. The plans of the cabal were ripe; and the aid of the inquisition, by the appointment of Aliaga, was added to the machinations of Uzeda's partisans. The king was deeply incensed at the mysterious absence of Calderon, for which a thousand ingenious conjectures were invented. The Duke of Lerma, infirm and enfeebled by years, was unable to confront his foes. With imbecile despair he called on the name of Calderon; and, when no trace of that powerful ally could be discovered, he forbore even to seek and interview with the king. Suddenly the storm broke. One evening Lerma received the royal order to surrender his posts, and to quit the court by day-break. It was in this very hour that the door of Lerma's chamber opened, and Roderigo Calderon stood before him. But, how changed — how blasted from his former self! His eyes were sunk deep in their sockets, and their fire was quenched; his cheeks were hollow, his frame bent, and, when he spoke, his voice was as that of one calling from the tomb.

"Behold me, Duke de Lerma, I am returned at last!"

“Returned! — blessings on thee! Where hast thou been? Why didst thou desert me? — no matter, thou art returned! Fly to the king — tell him I am not old! I do not want repose. Defeat the villany of my unnatural son! They would banish me, Calderon; banish me in the very prime of my years! My son says I am old — old! ha! ha! Fly to the prince; he too has immured himself in his apartment. He would not see me; he will see *thee*!”

“Ay — the prince! we have cause to love each other!”

“Ye have, indeed! Hasten, Calderon; not a moment is to be lost! Banished! Calderon, *shall* I be banished?” And the old man, bursting into tears, fell at the feet of Calderon, and clasped his knees. — “Go, go, I implore thee! Save me; I loved *thee*, Calderon, I always loved thee. Shall our foes triumph? Shall the horn of the wicked be exalted?”

For a moment (so great is the mechanical power of habit) there returned to Calderon something of his wonted energy and spirit; a light broke from his sunken eyes; he drew himself up to the full of his stately height: “I thought I had done with courts and with life,” said he; “but I will make one more effort; I will not forsake you in your hour of need. Yes, Uzeda shall be baffled; I will seek the king. Fear not, my lord, fear not; the charm of my power is not yet broken.”

So saying, Calderon raised the cardinal from the ground, and extricating himself from the old man’s grasp, strode, with his customary air of majestic self-reliance, to the door. Just ere he reached it, three low, but regular, knocks sounded on the panel: the

door opened, and the space without was filled with the dark forms of the officers of the inquisition.

"Stand!" said a deep voice; "stand, Roderigo Calderon, Marquis de Siete Iglesias; in the name of the most holy inquisition, we arrest thee!"

"Aliaga!" muttered Calderon, falling back —

"Peace!" interrupted the Jesuit. "Officers, remove your prisoner."

"Poor old man," said Calderon, turning towards the cardinal, who stood spell-bound and speechless, "*thy* life at least is safe. For me, I defy fate! — Lead on!"

The prince of Spain soon recovered from the shock which the death of Beatriz at first occasioned him. New pleasures chased away even remorse. He appeared again in public a few days after the arrest of Calderon; and he made strong intercession on behalf of his former favourite. But even had the inquisition desired to relax its grasp, or Uzeda to forego his vengeance, so great was the exultation of the people at the fall of the dreaded and obnoxious secretary, and so numerous the charges which party malignity added to those which truth could lay at his door, that it would have required a far bolder monarch than Philip the Third to have braved the voice of a whole nation for the sake of a disgraced minister. The prince himself was soon induced, by new favourites, to consider any further interference on his part equally impolitic as vain; and the Duke d'Uzeda, and Don Gaspar de Guzman, were minions quite as supple, while they were companions infinitely more respectable.

One day an officer, attending the levee of the prince, with whom he was a special favourite, pre-

sented a memorial requesting the interest of his highness for an appointment in the royal armies, that, he had just learned by a express, was vacant.

“And whose death comes so opportunely for thy rise, Don Alvar?” asked the Infant.

“Don Martin Fonseca. He fell in the late skirmish, pierced by a hundred wounds ”

The prince started, and turned hastily away. The officer lost all favour from that hour, and never learned his offence.

Meanwhile months passed, and Calderon still languished in his dungeon. At last the inquisition opened against him its dark register of accusations. First of these charges was that of sorcery, practised on the king; the rest were, for the most part, equally grotesque and extravagant. These accusations Calderon met with a dignity which confounded his foes, and belied the popular belief in the elements of his character. Submitted to the rack, he bore its tortures without a groan; and all historians have accorded concurrent testimony to the patience and heroism which characterised the close of his wild and meteoric career. At length Philip the Third died: the Infant ascended the throne — that prince, for whom the ambitious courtier had perilled alike life and soul! The people now believed that they should be defrauded of their victim. They were mistaken. The new king, by this time, had forgotten even the existence of the favourite of the prince. But Guzman, who, while affecting to minister to the interests of Uzeda, was secretly aiming at the monopoly of the royal favour, felt himself insecure while Calderon yet lived. The operations of the inquisition were too slow for the impatience of his

fears; and as that dread tribunal affected never to inflict death until the accused had confessed his guilt, the firmness of Calderon baffled the vengeance of the ecclesiastical law. New inquiries were set on foot: a corpse was discovered, buried in Calderon's garden — the corpse of a female. He was accused of the murder. Upon that charge he was transferred from the inquisition to the regular courts of justice. No evidence could be produced against him; but, to the astonishment of all, he made no defence, and his silence was held the witness of his crime. He was adjudged to the scaffold — he smiled when he heard the sentence.

An immense crowd, one bright day in summer, were assembled in the place of execution. A shout of savage exultation rent the air as Roderigo Calderon, Marquis de Siete Iglesias, appeared upon the scaffold. But, when the eyes of the multitude rested — not upon that lofty and stately form, in all the pride of manhood, which they had been accustomed to associate with their fears of the stern genius and iron power of the favourite — but upon a bent and spectral figure, that seemed already on the verge of a natural grave, with a face ploughed deep with traces of unutterable wo, and hollow eyes that looked, with dim and scarce conscious light, over the human sea that murmured and swayed below, the tide of the popular emotion changed; to rage and triumph succeeded shame and pity. Not a hand was lifted up in accusation — not a voice was raised in rebuke or joy. Beside Calderon stood the appointed priest, whispering cheer and consolation.

“Fear not, my son,” said the holy man. “The pang of the body strikes years of purgatory from thy

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

THE

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE

A PLAY

IN FIVE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Louis the Fourteenth.

The Duke de Lauzun,
Count de Grammont, } (*Courtiers*).
Marquis de Montespan,

The Marquis de Bragelone (*betrothed to Mademoiselle de La Vallière*).

Bertrand (*the Armourer*).

Courtiers, Gentlemen of the Chamber, Priests, &c.

Madame de La Vallière.

Mademoiselle (afterwards Duchess) de La Vallière.

Madame de Montespan.

The Queen.

Abbess.

Nuns, Ladies, Maids of Honour, &c.

P R E F A C E.

IT seems among the caprices of literature, that one whose life has excited an interest so unfading and universal, and whose destinies — even more than the splendors of his reign, the solemn graces of his court, or the stately muses of Racine — invest with no unreal poetry the memory of Louis the Fourteenth, — that one whose very fate was a poem, whose very struggles were a drama, should have furnished so little inspiration to the poet, and escaped altogether the resuscitation of the stage. If it be true (as I hold it indisputable) that the great material of dramatic representation lies not so much in the analysis of one, as in the delineation of adverse and opposing, passions, perhaps few subjects can be found more adapted to the skill of the dramatic poet than the love and the repentance, the fall and the atonement, of Madame de la Vallière. The strongest contrast of motives, the most tragic struggle of impulse and of principle, in the breast of a woman, is ever that which is created by the conflict of the Affections and the Conscience: nor does the spectacle fail of a great and an impressive moral, if, after all the concessions and most of the triumphs of the first, the last becomes eventually the victor.

The mind of Madame de La Vallière was not of the highest order. With her the reasoning faculty was

seated in the heart; but her very weakness, united and embellished as it was with so much genuine tenderness of sentiment and honest depth of emotion, ought to render her character yet more affecting on the stage. For pathos is rarely derived from the sternness of qualities purely intellectual; and we are led, by our sympathies with the infirmities of our nature, to conclusions that purify and exalt it. The philosophy of the drama is the metaphysics of the passions.

But if the character of Madame de La Vallière be dramatic, it is a task, I allow, of considerable difficulty, to concentrate the events of her life into the limits of a drama. The Probabilities require us to extend the period of action over the eight years of her historical career; that sad, not sudden, but unceasing, progress from innocence to splendour — from the idolized to the deserted — from the deserted to the penitent and devout. In the interval between the second and third act more especially, the reader will tacitly supply the lapse of time that may seem to him required by such harmonies as Fiction, insensibly, as it were, establishes with Fact.

The time is past for discussing the propriety of the Unities, which even the dazzling example of the Author of *Sardanapalus* could not prove to be other than the sacrifice of Nature, from a misguided superstition for the Natural. The unity of character — the only one, indeed, on which Aristotle very peremptorily insists — is also the only one which all time and all criticism must recognise as essential and indispensable. When the Stagirite condemns Euripides for violating the unity of his character of *Iphigenia*, by ascribing to her, in one sentence, sentiments wholly inapposite to, and irreconcilable with, the character which preceding sentences had portrayed, that great philosopher proved, by the most illustrious example, what common sense might suffice to teach us — viz., that no poetry of expression

can atone for that anomaly in poetical creation by which the creatures are made inconsistent with themselves. It may, however, be noticeable, that when fidelity to truth compels us to waive the minor unity of *time*, nicer and more delicate refinements of art are sometimes afforded us in our treatment of the unity of *character*. Maintaining the paramount qualities that individualize our creation, we are enabled subtilely, and (to the uninvestigating) almost insensibly, to show how we have served ourselves of the lapse of time, to modify them or develop. Macbeth in the fifth act is not the Macbeth of the first. But the bold, the ruthless, never the *hardened* tyrant, is precisely that which years and events would necessarily ripen, from the brave, but vacillating, the tender but ambitious thane, who requires omen and prediction, the urgings of hell, and the familiar inspiration of a feller and more powerful mind, to shape the thought into the action, the "Dare not," to "I will."

In the Play now submitted to the reader, the supposed interval of time between the second and third act produces, though not perhaps very markedly, its effect on the character of Louis, — it brings (as that interval of time did in life) into more visible display his infirmer and vainer qualities, his gorgeous and sovereign selfishness, his morbid craving for amusement (the mental vision aching beneath the glare of his own pomp), the properties of a temperament restless, eager, susceptible, yet cold, with pampered energies and uncultivated resources. In the earlier portion of the play, Louis is not yet "The Great." He is the Louis of Fontainebleau, — not the Louis of Versailles, — in the flush of a brilliant youth, in the excitement of a first love.

It is a task not a little arduous to convey to the spectator or the reader the notion at once of what Louis the Fourteenth appears to posterity, and of what

he seemed to his contemporaries. Nor would it perhaps be possible to effect the former object, and yet to give La Vallière all her real excuses for her weakness, if fortunately in representing Louis as the lover we did not place him in the very position most favourable to his external graces, his felicity of phrase, his magnificence of taste, his softness of feeling disguising his want of heart, and that peculiar royalty of thought and sentiment, which had the twofold advantage of rendering homely and plebeian those who rejected, bombastic and ridiculous those who adopted, the imitation.

The Duke de Lauzun,* who, in the judgment of La Bruyère, was to bequeath, in himself, an enigma to posterity, has left to our more distant examination a character sufficiently intelligible. Remarkable talents enabled him to cheat with grandeur, and to be convicted of fraud in an attitude of grace. He never was more admired than in what were called his 'misfortunes!' In other words, the merited reverses of a strong-minded rogue appeared in him but the sufferings of a philosophical hero. His genius was his destruction. Daring, versatile, sarcastic, sceptical, every thing his fate presented to him, whether of obstruction or advancement, was a trifle to be toyed with to-day, and thrown away to-morrow. With all his general lack of principle, he betrayed, it is true, occasional feeling of generosity and glimpses of an original nobleness. But I suspect that he himself would have esteemed the best part of his nature to be its weakest and most foolish. In this Play, the Duke de Lauzun is represented in that view of his multiform character which seemed to me most in keeping with the position he assumed towards both Montespan and La Vallière, and most in harmony with the grouping of my own composition. But whoever

* Lauzun was properly but a Count at the date of the Play. But as he is so well known by his latter and higher title, I have ventured on the slight anachronism.

performs the part will forgive me for observing, that whatever it contains of comic must be regarded as a sign of the easy complacency with which a bold and able *intrigant* moves among things and persons that he deems his puppets, trifling, as it were, with a part beneath his real genius. His gaiety is not animal, but intellectual; — at least, such is my conception of it.

In the character of Bragelone is embodied whatever in the Play pretends to the Heroic, — it is an Episode that introduces the Epic into a Court Poem. In this character I have used my licence of idealizing the Realities. The Bragelone of Biography died of a broken heart after Madame de La Vallière became the victim of the King. In reviving, I have dared to re-create him. In his character I seek to portray and individualize the old, chivalric, high-thoughted, and high-spirited race upon whose graves rose the reckless, profligate, and brilliant generation of Louis the Fourteenth. That splendid Sovereign, whose natural talents were perhaps greater than we are now willing to acknowledge, confirmed the form of the Monarchy, but destroyed the soul of the Aristocracy. Chivalry was the Mother of the Court, and died of her *accouchement*. Bragelone stands alone — the last of his race. His only weakness — the only infirmity which reduces him from our respect to our sympathy — is in his misplaced, but gallant and faithful love. Removed from this influence, I have wished him never to appear, but to dwarf the proportions of the Falsely-Great; thus the sarcastic Lauzun beside him sinks into the slanderous jester; the haughty Louis himself, into the abashed and superstitious criminal. But, brought under the influence of his passion, the sternness of Bragelone is ever invaded by his softness. He is here again meant to be faithful to the age he represents — to the spirit of its knightly and crusader-like Romance. Even his adoption of the cowl is in harmony with the ancient religious character — with the Ideal of the old Franc and Germanic race, in

which the warrior was the germ of the monk, and Life laid its trophies on the altar, and sought its resting-place in the cell. Where the character of Bragelone most takes its leaven from the times on which he has fallen, is in his actual experience of mankind. His dim prophecies to the King — his soliloquy on life towards the close of the fifth act — his definition of the true religion of the cloister, partake of the philosophy we form not in the closet, but in the world. Nor would these sentiments, I allow, be appropriate to Bragelone, regarded as the mere soldier; but they are of the wisdom which sorrow and disappointment may be supposed to bring to a powerful and reflective mind, which the rough contact of the world, and the actual interchange of various opinions with various men, have released from the prejudices of class and sect: and we must remember that the sentiments he utters, as to the effect of the wars of Louis, and the real uses of the monastery, were not heresies unbroached at that day even among loyal subjects and orthodox Catholics.

I know not how far my feeble execution of this character has fallen short of the conception: I know still less how far it will produce upon the stage the more subtle and the higher effects it is intended to convey; — Alas! the Plot of the Drama does not introduce it sufficiently often, to render it worthy the acceptance of that great actor who never mistakes the conception of an Author, and yet who invariably exalts it.

May I now be permitted to pass from the Personages of this Drama to something between an explanation and an apology for my general treatment of the subject I have selected, and of the times I have portrayed. It seemed to me that subject and time alike furnished materials for the graver Comedy, no less than for the development of tragic emotions. The intrigues, the pageants, the hollowness and servility of the Court of

France, the philosophy embodied by a Rochefoucault, the manners delineated by a Dangeau, the morality extolled by a Genlis, are not to be approached by epic declamation; they are only brought nearer to us by the glass of an easy satire, which defines the object by diminishing, not exaggerating, the proportions which our human vision is too apt to enlarge.

The beings of Versailles were, for the most part, men to whom passions (which *are* tragedy) were unknown. It was through humours (which *are* comedy) that they represented the form and the spirit of the society they created, working out, through gaiety, a solemn and a lasting moral. If this, my impression of that scene, and that time, be true, I trust I shall be pardoned, not only for the tone of the lighter portions of the play, but for the use of a diction, in such portions, which will probably sound a little prosaic to ears accustomed to the florid prettiness of modern verse, or attuned to the elaborate quaintness of the elder dramatists. To thoughts and to persons that belong to prose, belongs prosaic expression. Where the subject of itself rises into poetry, I have given whatever advantage of poetical language it is in the power of one whom the Muse has long deserted, to command.

I now dismiss this experiment to its fate, prefaced by these (I fear tedious) observations, which may prove at least that it is not without something of preliminary study that I have ventured to diverge into a new path of that great realm of fiction, which grants indeed to indolence the shade and the fountain, but guards the fruit and the treasure, as the just monopoly of labour. *

E. L. B.

Paris, 21st December, 1835.

* The necessities of poetical justice have obliged me to an anachronism in the punishment of Madame de Montespan. In reality,

if longer deferred, it was yet more strikingly retributive than it appears in the play. Betraying a friend, by a friend she was betrayed; the nun was avenged by the devotee; and what Montespan was to La Vallière, Maintenon was to Montespan. I should also add that the concentration and climax of interest required on the stage has obliged me to introduce Louis in the *last* scene. In my first outline of the Plo, and more in accordance with strict historical data, it was in the hotel of Madame de La Vallière (when she announced her intention of taking the veil) that the King acted that part, and uttered those sentiments which I have ascribed to him in the convent of the Carmelites.

THE
DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

Time — sun-set. On the foreground an old Chateau; beyond, Vineyards and Woods, which present, through their openings, Views of a River, reflecting the sun-set. At a distance, the turrets of the Convent of the Carmelites.

Madame and Mademoiselle de la Vallière.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Tis our last eve, my mother!

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Thou regrett'st it,
My own Louise! albeit the court invites thee —
A court beside whose glories, dull and dim
The pomp of eastern kings, by poets told;
A court ———

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

In which I shall not see my mother!
Nor these old walls, in which, from every stone,
Childhood speaks eloquent of happy years;
Nor vines and woods, which bade me love the earth,
Nor yonder spires, which raised that love to God! —
(*The vesper bell tolls.*)

The vesper bell! — my mother, when, once more,
 I hear from those grey towers that holy chime,
 May thy child's heart be still as full of Heaven,
 And callous to all thoughts of earth, save those
 Which mirror Eden in the face of Home!

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Do I not know thy soul? — through every snare
 My gentle dove shall 'scape with spotless plumes.
 Alone in courts, I have no fear for *thee*; —
 Some natures take from Innocence the lore
 Experience teaches; and their delicate leaves,
 Like the soft plant, shut out all wrong, and shrink
 From vice by instinct, as the wise by knowledge:
 And such is thine! *My* voice thou wilt not hear,
 But Thought shall whisper where my voice would warn,
 And Conscience be thy mother and thy guide!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Oh, may I merit all thy care, and most
 Thy present trust! — Thou'lt write to me, my mother,
 And tell me of thyself: amidst the court
 My childhood's images shall rise. Be kind
 To the poor cotters in the wood; — alas,
 They'll miss me in the winter! — and my birds? —
 Thy hand will feed them? — —

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And that noble heart
 That loves thee as my daughter should be loved —
 The gallant Bragelone? * should I hear
 Some tidings Fame forgets — if in the din

* The author has, throughout this play, availed himself of the poetical licence to give to the name of Bragelone the Italian pronunciation, and to accent the final e.

Of camps I learn thy image makes his solace,
Shall I not write of *him*? —

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*with indifference*).

His name will breathe
Of home and friendship; — yes! —

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Of nought beside?

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, why so pressing? — let me change the theme.
The King! — you have seen him; — is he, as they say,
So fair — so stately?

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ay, in truth, my daughter,
A king that wins the awe he might command.
Splendid in peace, and terrible in war;
Wise in the council — gentle in the bower.

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Strange, that so often through mine early dreams
A royal vision flitted; — a proud form,
Upon whose brow nature had written ‘*empire*;
While, on the lip, — love, smiling, wrapt in sunshine
The charmed world that was its worshipper —
A form like that which clothed the gods of old,
Lured from Olympus by some mortal maid, —
Youthful it seemed — but with ambrosial youth;
And beautiful — but half as beauty were
A garb too earthly for a thing divine: —
Was it not strange, my mother?

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

A child’s fancy,
Breathed into life by thy brave father’s soul.
He taught thee, in thy cradle yet, to lisp

Thy sovereign's name in prayer — and still together,
 In thy first infant creed, were linked the lessons
 'TO HONOUR GOD, AND LOVE THE KING;' it was
 A part of that old knightly faith of France
 Which made it half religion to be loyal.

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

It might be so. I have preserved the lesson,
 Ev'n with too weak a reverence. — Yet, 'tis strange!
 A dream so oft renewed! —

MADAME de la Vallière.

Here comes thy lover!
 Thou wilt not blame him if his lips repeat
 The question mine have asked? Alphonso, welcome!

SCENE II.

Bragelone, Madame and Mademoiselle de la Vallière.

BRAGELONE.

My own Louise! — ah! dare I call thee so?
 War never seemed so welcome! since we part,
 Since the soft sunshine of thy smiles must fade
 From these dear scenes, it soothes, at least, to think
 I shall not linger on the haunted spot,
 And feel, forlorn amidst the gloom of absence,
 How dark is all once lighted by thine eyes.

[Madame de la Vallière retires into the chateau.]

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Can friendship flatter thus? — or wouldst thou train
 My ear betimes to learn the courtier's speech?

BRAGELONE.

Louise! Louise! this is our parting hour:
 Me war demands — and thee the court allures.
 In such an hour, the old romance allowed

The maid to soften from her coy reserve,
And her true knight, from some kind words, to take
Hope's talisman to battle! — Dear Louise!
Say, canst thou love me? —

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sir! — I! — love! methinks
It is a word that —

BRAGELONE.

Sounds upon thy lips
Like 'land' upon the mariner's, and speaks
Of home and rest after a stormy sea.
Sweet girl, my youth has passed in camps; and war
Hath somewhat scathed my manhood ere my time.
Our years are scarce well-mated: the soft spring
Is thine, and o'er my summer's waning noon
Grave autumn creeps. Thou say'st 'I flatter!' — well,
Love taught me first the golden words in which
The honest heart still coins its massive ore.
But fairer words from falser lips, will soon
Make *my* plain courtship rude. — Louise! thy sire
Betrothed us in thy childhood: I have watched thee
But into virgin May, and in thy youth
Have seemed to hoard my own! — think of *thee*,
And I am youthful still! — The passionate prayer —
The wild idolatry — the purple light
Bathing the cold earth from a Hebe's urn; —
Yea, all the soul's divine excess which youth
Claims as its own, came back when first I loved thee
And yet so well I love, that if thy heart
Recoil from mine, — if but one single wish,
A shade more timid than the fear which ever
Blends trembling twilight with the starry hope

Of maiden dreams — would start thee from our union,
Speak, and my suit is tongueless!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

O, my lord!

If to believe all France's chivalry
Boasts not a nobler champion, — if to feel
Proud in your friendship, honoured in your trust, —
If this be love, and I have known no other,
Why then —

BRAGELONE.

Why then, thou lov'st me!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière (*aside.*)

Shall I say it?

I feel 'twere to deceive him! Is it love?
Love! — no, it *is* no love — (*Aloud.*) My noble lord,
As yet I know not all mine own weak heart;
I would not pain thee, yet would not betray.
Legend and song have often painted love,
And my heart whispers not the love which should be
The answer to thine own: — thou hadst best forget me!

BRAGELONE.

Forget!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

I am not worthy of thee!

BRAGELONE.

Hold! —

My soul is less heroic than I deemed it.
Perchance my passion asks too much from thine,
And would forestal the fruit ere yet the blossom
Blushes from out the coy and maiden leaves.
No! let *me* love; and say, perchance the time
May come when *thou* wilt bid me *not* forget thee.
Absence may plead my cause; it hath some magic;

I fear not contrast with the courtier-herd;
 And thou art not Louise if thou art won
 By a smooth outside and a honeyed tongue.
 No! when thou seest these hunters after power,
 These shadows, minioned to the royal sun, —
 Proud to the humble, servile to the great, —
 Perchance thou'lt learn how much one honest heart,
 That never wronged a friend or shunn'd a foe, —
 How much the old hereditary knighthood,
 Faithful to God, to glory, and to love,
 Outweighs an universe of cringing courtiers!
 Louise, I ask no more! — I bide my time!

Re-enter Madame de la Vallière from the chateau.

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

The twilight darkens. Art thou now, Alphonso,
 Convinced her heart is such as thou wouldst have it?

BRAGELONE.

It is a heavenly tablet — but my name
 Good angels have not writ there!

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, as yet,
 Love wears the mask of friendship: she must love thee.

BRAGELONE (*half incredulously.*)

Think'st thou so?

MADAME DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ay, be sure!

BRAGELONE.

I'll think so too.

(*Turns to Mademoiselle de la Vallière.*)

Bright lady of my heart! — (*Aside.*) By Heaven! 'tis true!
 The rose grows richer on her cheek, like hues
 That, in the silence of the virgin dawn,
 Predict, in blushes, light that glads the earth.

Her mother spoke aright; — ah, yes, she loves me!
Bright lady of my heart, farewell! and yet
Again — farewell!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Honour and health be with you!

MADAME de la Vallière.

Nay, my Louise, when warriors wend to battle,
The maid they serve grows half a warrior too;
And does not blush to bind on mailed bosoms
The banner of her colours.

BRAGELONE.

Dare I ask it?

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

A soldier's child could never blush, my Lord,
To belt so brave a breast; — and yet, — well, wear it.
(Placing her scarf round Bragelone's hauberk.)

BRAGFLONE.

Ah! add for thy sake.

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

For the sake of one
Who honours worth, and ne'er since Bayard fell,
Have banners flaunted o'er a knight more true
To France and Fame; —

BRAGELONE.

And love?

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Nay, hush, my Lord;
I said not that.

BRAGELONE.

But France and Fame shall say it!
Yes, if thou hear'st men speak of Bragelone,
If proudest chiefs confess he bore him bravely,
Come life, come death, his glory shall be thine,

And all the light it borrowed from thine eyes,
 Shall gild thy name. Ah! scorn not *then* to say,
 'He loved me well!' How well! God shield and bless thee?
 [Exit.

MADemoiselle de la Vallière (*aside.*)
 Most worthy love! *why* can I love him not?

MADAME de la Vallière.
 Peace to his gallant heart! when next we meet,
 May I have gained a son — and thou —

MADemoiselle de la Vallière (*quickly.*)
 My mother,
 This night let every thought be given to *thee*!
 Beautiful scene, farewell! — farewell, my home!
 And thou, grey convent, whose inspiring chime
 Measures the hours with prayer, that morn and eve
 Life may ascend the ladder of the angels,
 And climb to heaven! serene retreats, farewell!
 And now, my mother! — no! some hours must yet
 Pass ere our parting.

MADAME de la Vallière.
 Cheer thee, my Louise!
 And let us now within; the dews are falling —

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.
 And I forgot how ill thy frame may bear them.
 Pardon! — within, within! —

(*Stopping short, and gazing fondly on Madame de la Vallière.*)

Your hand, dear mother!
 [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

An old Armoury, of the heavy French Architecture preceding the time of Francis the First, in the Castle of Bragelone.

Bertrand, the armourer, employed in polishing a sword.

BERTRAND.

There now! I think this blade will scarcely shame
My gallant master's hand; it was the weapon,
So legends say, with which the old Lord Rodolph
Slew, by the postern gate, his lady's leman!
Oh, we're a haughty race — we old French lords;
Our honour is unruined as our steel,
And, when provoked, as ruthless!

Enter Bragelone.

BRAGELONE.

Ah, old Bertrand!

Why, your brave spirit, 'mid these coats of mail,
Grows young again. So! this, then, is the sword
You'd have me wear. God wot! a tranchant blade,
Not of the modern fashion.

BERTRAND.

My good lord,
Yourself are scarcely of the modern fashion.
They tell me, that to serve one's king for nothing,
To deem one's country worthier than one's self,
To hold one's honour not a phrase to swear by, —
They tell me, now, all *this* is out of fashion.
Come, take the sword, my lord! — you have your father's
Stout arm and lordly heart: they're out of fashion,
And yet you keep the one — come, take the other.

BRAGELONE.

Why you turn satirist!

BERTRAND.

Satirist! what is that!

BRAGELONE.

Satirists, my friend, are men who speak the truth
That courts may say — they do not know the fashion!
Satire on Vice is Wit's revenge on fools
That slander Virtue! — How now! look ye, Bertrand!
Methinks there is a notch here.

BERTRAND.

Ay, my lord;
I would not grind it out; — 'twas here the blade
Clove through the helmet, ev'n unto the chin,
Of that irreverent and most scoundrel Dutchman
Who stabbed you, through your hauberk-joints—what time
You placed your breast before the king.

BRAGELONE.

Hence, ever
Be it believed, that in his hour of need,
A king's sole safeguard are his subject's hearts!
Ha, ha! good sword! that was a famous stroke!
Thou didst brave deeds that day, thou quaint old servant,
Though now — thou'rt not the fashion!

BERTRAND.

Bless that look,
And that glad laugh! they bring me back the day
When first old Bertrand armed you for the wars, —
A fair-faced stripling; yet, beshrew my heart,
You spurred that field before the bearded chins,
And saved the gallant Lord La Vallière's standard,
And yet you were a stripling then.

BRAGELONE.

La Vallière!
The very name goes dancing through my veins.

Bertrand, look round the armoury! Is there nought
 I wore that first campaign? Nay, nay! no matter!
 I wear the *name within* me. Harkye, Bertrand!
 We're not so young as then we were: when next
 We meet, old friend, we both will end our labours,
 And find some nook, amidst yon antique trophies,
 Wherein to hang this idle mail.

BERTRAND.

Huzza!

The village dames speak truth — my Lord will marry!
 And I shall nurse, in these old withered arms,
 Another boy — for France another hero.
 Ha, ha! I am so happy.

BRAGELONE.

Good old man!

Why this is like my father's hall — since thus
 My father's servants love me!

BERTRAND.

All must love you!

BRAGELONE.

All! — let me think so!

(*Bugle sounds.*)

Hark, the impatient bugle!

I hear the neigh of my exultant charger,
 Breathing from far the glorious air of war.
 Give me the sword!

(*Enter Servant, with a letter,*)

Her mother's hand! — 'Louise,
 Arrived at court, writes sadly, and amidst
 The splendour pines for home,' — I knew she would!
 My own Louise! — 'Speaks much of the King's goodness; —
 Goodness to her! — that thought shall give the King
 A tenfold better soldier! — 'From thy friend,

Who trusts ere lone to hail thee as her son.
Her son! — a blessed name! These lines shall be
My heart's true shield, and ward away each weapon.
He who shall wed Louise has conquered Fate,
And smiles at earthly foes! — Again the bugle!
Give me your hand, old man! My fiery youth
Went not to battle with so blithe a soul
As now burns in me, — So! she pines for home —
I knew she would — I knew it! Farewell, Bertrand!

[*Exit*

BERTRAND.

Oh! there'll be merry doings in the hall
When my dear lord returns! A merry wedding.
And then — and then — oh, such a merry christening!
How well I fancy his grave manly face
Brightening upon his first-born.

(*As he is going*)

Re-enter Bragelone.

BRAGELONE.

Ho, there! Bertrand!

One charge I had forgot: — Be sure they train
The woodbine richly round the western wing —
My mother's old apartment. Well, man! well!
Do you not hear me?

BERTRAND.

You, my lord! the woodbine?

BRAGELONE.

Yes; see it duly done. I know she loves it;
It clambers round her lattice. I would not
Have one thing absent she could miss.

Remember!

[*Exit.*

BERTRAND.

And this is he whom Warriors call 'the Stern!'
The dove's heart beats beneath that lion breast.
Pray Heaven his lady may deserve him! Oh,
What news for my good dame! — i'faith, I'm glad
I was the first to learn the secret. So!
This year a wife — next year a boy! I'll teach
The young rogue how his father clove the Dutchman
Down to the chin! Ha, ha! old Bertrand now
Will be of use again on winter nights, —
I know he'll be the picture of his father!

[Exit.]

SCENE IV.

*An Ante-chamber in the Palace of Fontainebleau.**Enter Lauzun and Grammont, at opposite doors.*

LAUZUN.

Ah, Count, good day! — Were you at court last night?

GRAMMONT.

Yes; and the court is grown the richer by
A young new beauty.

LAUZUN.

So! — her name?

GRAMMONT.

La Vallière!

LAUZUN.

Ay, I have heard; — a maid of honour?

GRAMMONT.

Yes.

The women say she's plain.

LAUZUN.

The women! oh,
The case it is that's plain — *she* must be lovely!

GRAMMONT.

The dear, kind, gossips of the court, declare
The pretty novice hath conceived a fancy —
A wild, romantic, innocent, strange fancy —
For our young King; a girlish love, like that
Told of in fairy tales: she saw his picture,
Sighed to the canvass, murmured to the colours,
And — fell in love with carmine and gambouge.

LAUZUN.

The simple dreamer! Well, she saw the king?

GRAMMONT.

And while she saw him, like a rose, when May
Breathes o'er its bending bloom, she seemed to shrink
Into her modest self, and a low sigh
Shook blushes (sweetest rose-leaves!) from her beauty.

LAUZUN.

You paint it well.

GRAMMONT.

And ever since that hour
She bears the smiling malice of her comrades
With an unconscious and an easy sweetness;
As if alike *her* virtue and *his* greatness
Made love impossible: — so, down the stream
Of purest thought, her heart glides on to danger.

LAUZUN.

Did Louise note her? — Has he heard the gossip?

GRAMMONT.

Neither, methinks: his Majesty is cold.
The art of pomp, and not the art of love,
Tutors his skill — Augustus more than Ovid.

LAUZUN.

The time will come! The King as yet is young,
Flush'd with the novelty of sway, and fired

With the great dream of cutting Dutchmen's throats :
A tiresome dream — the poets call it 'Glory.'

GRAMMONT.

So much the better, — 'tis one rival less ;
The handsome King would prove a dangerous suitor.

LAUZUN.

Oh, hang the danger! — he must have a mistress ;
'Tis an essential to a court: how many
Favours, one scarcely likes to ask a King,
One flatters from a King's inamorata!
We courtiers fatten on the royal vices ;
And, while the King lives chaste, he cheats, he robs me
Of ninety-nine per cent !

GRAMMONT.

Ha, ha! — Well, Duke,
We meet again to-night. You join the revels ?
Till then, adieu !

LAUZUN.

Adieu, dear Count! [*Exit Grammont.*

The King

Must have a mistress: I must lead that mistress.
The times are changed! — 't was by the sword and spear
Our fathers bought ambition — vulgar butchers !
But now our wit's our spear — intrigue our armour ;
The ante-chamber is our field of battle ;
And the best hero is — the cleverest rogue! [*Exit.*

SCENE V.

Night the Gardens of the Fontainebleau, brilliantly illuminated with coloured lamps — Fountains, vases, and statues in perspective — A pavilion in the back-ground — to the right, the palace of Fontainebleau, illuminated.*

Enter Courtiers, Ladies, &c. — A Dance. — Then enter Grammont and Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

A brilliant scene!

GRAMMONT.

And see! to make it brighter,
That most divine, diverting, pompous Marquis —

LAUZUN.

Who has but one idea, and two phrases!

GRAMMONT.

The one idea — that he is a marquis!
And the two phrases?

LAUZUN.

Let himself inform you.

Enter the Marquis de Montespan, ridiculously overdressed.

MONTESPAN.

My Lords, I'm charmed to see you! — How's your health,
Dear Count!

GRAMMONT.

But poorly, Sir.

MONTESPAN.

I'm in despair!

And yours?

LAUZUN.

Most flourishing!

* The effect of the scene should be principally made by jets-d'eau, waterfalls, &c.

MONTESPAN.

I'm charmed — enraptured!

LAUZUN.

Why don't you bring your wife to court, dear Marquis?

MONTESPAN.

My wife! — (what's that to him?) — she hates the pomp,
And stays at home to think of *me* — and bless
The fate that made her —

LAUZUN.

Married to a Marquis?

MONTESPAN.

Precisely so!

LAUZUN,

And such a Marquis!

MONTESPAN.

Oh!

You are too bad! — have done!

LAUZUN.

The very words

Your lovely lady said when last I saw her!

MONTESPAN.

She copies me — 'tis natural! —

GRAMMONT.

Hist! — the King!

Enter Louis, followed by Courtiers, &c.

LOUIS.

Fair eve and pleasant revels to you all!

Ah, Duke! — a word with you!

(Courtiers give way.)

Thou hast seen, my Lauzun.

The new and fairest floweret of our court,
This youngest of the graces — sweet la Vallière,
Blushing beneath the world's admiring eyes?

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

(So, so! — he's caught!) Your majesty speaks warmly;
Your praise is just — and grateful —

LOUIS.

Grateful?

LAUZUN.

Ay.

Know you not, Sire, it is the jest, among
The pretty prattlers of the royal chamber,
That this young Dian of the woods has found
Endymion in a king, — a summer dream,
Bright, but with vestal fancies! — scarcely love,
But that wild interval of hopes and fears
Through which the child glides, trembling, to the woman?

LOUIS.

Blest thought! Oh what a picture of delight
Your words have painted! —

LAUZUN.

While we speak, behold,
Through yonder alleys, with her sister planets,
Your moonlight beauty gleams.

LOUIS.

'Tis she! this shade
Shall hide us! — quick — [*Enters one of the bosquets.*]

LAUZUN (*following him.*)

I trust my creditors
Will grow the merrier from this night's adventure!
Enter Mademoiselle de la Vallière, and Maids of Honour.

FIRST MAID.

How handsome looks the Duke de Guiche to-night!

SECOND MAID.

Well! to my taste, the graceful Grammont bears
The bell from all! —

(THIRD MAID.

But, then, that charming Lauzun
Has so much wit!

FIRST MAID.

And which, of all these gallants,
May please the fair La Vallière most?

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

In truth
I scarcely marked them; when the King is by,
Who can have eye, or ear, or thought for others?

FIRST MAID.

Your raise your fancies high!

SECOND MAID.

And raise them vainly!

The King disdains all love!

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Who spoke of love?

The sunflower, gazing on the Lord of heaven,
Asks but its sun to shine! — Who spoke of love?
And who would wish the bright and lofty Louis
To stoop from glory? Love should not confound
So great a spirit with the herd of men.
Who spoke of love? —

FIRST MAID.

My country friend, you talk
Extremely well; but some young lord will teach you
To think of Louis less, and more of love.

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Nay, ev'n the very presence of his greatness
Exalts the heart from each more low temptation.
He seems to walk the earth as if to raise
And purify our wandering thoughts, by fixing

Thought on himself; — and she who thinks on Louis
Shuts out the world, and scorns the name of love!

FIRST MAID.

Wait till you're tried —

(*Music.*)

But, hark! the music chides us
For wasting this most heavenly night so idly.

Come! let us join the dancers.

[*Exeunt Maids.*

(*As La Vallière follows, the King steals from the
bosquet, and takes her hand, while Lauzun retires
in the opposite direction.*)

LOUIS.

Sweet la Vallière!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah! —

LOUIS.

Nay, fair lady, fly not, ere we welcome
Her who gives night its beauty!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, permit me!

My comrades wait me.

LOUIS.

What! my loveliest subject
So soon a rebel? Silent! — Well, *be* mute,
And teach the world the eloquence of blushes.

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I may not listen —

LOUIS.

What if *I* had set
Thyself the example? What if I had listened,
Veiled by yon friendly boughs, and dared to dream
That one blest word which spoke of Louis absent
Might charm his presence, and make Nature music?

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

You did not, Sire! you could not!

LOUIS.

Could not hear thee,
Nor pine for these divine, unwitnessed moments,
To pray thee, dearest lady, to divorce
No more the thought of love from him who loves thee,
And — faithful still to glory — swears thy heart
Unfolds the fairest world a king can conquer!
Hear me, Louise!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

No, Sire; forget those words!
I am not what their foolish meaning spoke me,
But a poor simple girl, who loves her King.
And honour *more*! Forget, and do not scorn me! [*Exit.*]

LOUIS.

Her modest coyness fires me more than all
Her half-unconscious and most virgin love.
(*Enter Queen, Courtiers, Ladies, Guests, &c.; Lauzun,*
Grammont, and Montespan.)

Well, would the dancers pause awhile?

QUEEN.

Ev'n pleasure
Wearies at last.

LOUIS.

We've but to change its aspect,
And it resumes its freshness. — Ere the banquet
Calls us, my friends, we have prepared a game
To shame the lottery of this life, wherein
Each prize is neighboured by a thousand blanks.
Methinks it is the duty of a monarch
To set the balance right, and bid the wheel
Shower nought but prizes on the hearts he loves.

What ho, there ! with a merry music, raise
Fortune, to shew how Merit conquers Honours !

Music.

(The pavilion at the back of the stage opens, and discovers the Temple of Fortune, superbly illuminated. Fortune ; at her feet, a wheel of light ; at either hand, a golden vase, over each of which presides a figure — the one representing Merit, the other Honour.)

LOUIS.

Approach, fair dames and gallants ! Aye, as now,
May Fortune smile upon the friends of Louis.

(The Courtiers and ladies groupe around the vases. From the one over which Merit presides they draw lots, and receive in return from Honour various gifts of jewels, &c.)

(Enter Mademoiselle de la Vallière at the back of the stage. The King joins and converses with her in dumb show.)

MONTESPAN.

Now then for me ! —

(Draws and receives a necklace.)

A very lovely trinket !

LAUZUN *(followed by an old Lady of the Court.)*

Out on my stars ! — there is a dear old woman
Who takes my notes to Montespan's fair wife,
And wants a present ; if I give the ring
I drew, the haridan will play town-crier,
And all the Court will laugh at Lauzun's taste,
And take the wrinkled Mercury for my Venus.
Oho ! the Marquis ! 'faith I'll make him pay
My messenger to Madame.

MONTESPAN.

How it glitters !
Ten thousand crowns at least ! it sha'n't go under !

LAUZUN (*taking the necklace.*)

Prithee, indulge me, Marquis ; tell me, now,
What would you do with this poor bauble ?

MONTESPAN.

What ?

Why, (let it be between us ! — not a word
To my dear wife !) I'll turn it into monies.

LAUZUN.

Fie on you, Marquis, you disgrace our order ;
It ought to make your fortune as a man
Of taste and gallantry.

(*Turns to Old Lady.*)

Ah, Madame, see
What luck our Marquis has !

OLD LADY.

Superb ! the first
Water !

MONTESPAN.

She has the water in her mouth ;
Liquorish old jade ?

LAUZUN.

What, you admire the toy ?

OLD LADY.

Nay, who would not ?

LAUZUN.

The Marquis begs you'll give it
The worth such trifles take when worn by beauty !

MONTESPAN.

I — I — I'm in despair ! Don't be so silly.

OLD LADY.

Sweet Marquis, you're too gallant.

LAUZUN.

Yes, he says,

He shall be in despair if you disdain it.

(Old Lady puts on the necklace, curtsies profoundly to Montespan, and retires.)

There, Marquis; there, I've done it.

MONTESPAN.

Done it! yes!

Nice doings!

LAUZUN.

Hush! her great niece's cousin
Is aunt to the third cousin of a maid
Of honour to the Queen — you understand me?

MONTESPAN.

And what of that! I drew a necklace, Sir,
Not that old woman's pedigree from Adam.

LAUZUN.

Your wit is dense to-night, my dearest Marquis;
If you reflect, you'll see the Queen must hear of it.

MONTESPAN *(softened.)*

Aha! I see, — the Queen will hear of it!

LAUZUN.

And cry to Louis. 'What a generous man
Is that sweet Marquis!'

MONTESPAN.

Well now, I'm enraptured!

LOUIS *(To Mademoiselle de La Vallière.)*

Nay, if you smile not on me, then the scene
Hath lost its charm.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE

O Sire, all eyes are on us!

LOUIS.

All eyes *should* learn where homage should be rendered.

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I pray you, Sire —

THE QUEEN.

Will't please your Majesty
To try your fortune!

(Looks scornfully at Mademoiselle de La Vallière.)

LOUIS.

Fortune! Sweet La Vallière,
I only seek my fortune in thine eyes.
*(Music. Louis draws, and receives a diamond bracelet.
Ladies crowd round.)*

FIRST LADY.

How beautiful!

SECOND LADY.

Each gem were worth a duchy!

THIRD LADY.

Oh, happy she upon whose arms the King
Will bind the priceless band!

LOUIS *(approaching Mademoiselle de la Vallière.)*

Permit me, Lady.

(Clasps the bracelet.)

LAUZUN.

Well done—well play'd! In that droll game call'd Woman,
Diamonds are always trumps for hearts.

FIRST LADY.

Her hair's

Too light!

SECOND LADY.

Her walk is so provincial!

THIRD LADY.

D'ye think she paints?

LAUZUN.

Ha! ha! What envious eyes,
What fawning smiles, await the King's new Mistress!

ACT II.

SCENE I.

*The Gardens of Fontainebleau.**Enter Bragelone.*

BRAGELONE.

Why did we suffer her to seek the court?
It is a soil in which the reptile Slander
Still coils in slime around the fairest flower.
Can it be true? — Strange rumours pierced my tent
Coupling her name with—pah!—how foul the thought is!—
The maid the King loves! — Fie! I'll not believe it!
I left the camp — sped hither: if she's lost,
Why then! — down — down, base heart! wouldst *thou*
suspect her?
Thou — who shouldst be her shelter from suspicion?
But I may warn, advise, protect, and save her —
Save — 'tis a fearful word!

Enter Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

Lord Bragelone!
Methought your warrior spirit never breathed
The air of palaces! No evil tidings,
I trust, from Dunkirk?

BRAGELONE.

No. The *fleur-de-lis*

Rears her white crest unstained. Mine own affairs
Call me to court.

LAUZUN.

Affairs ! I hate the word ;
It sounds like debts.

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

This courtier may instruct me.
(*Aloud.*) Our King — he bears him well ?

LAUZUN.

Oh, bravely, Marquis ;
Engaged with this new palace of Versailles,
It costs some forty millions !

BRAGELONE.

Ay, the People
Groan at the burthen !

LAUZUN.

People ! — what's the *People* ?
I never heard that word at court ! — The *People* !

BRAGELONE.

I doubt not, Duke. The People, like the Air,
Is rarely heard, save when it speaks in thunder.
I pray you grace for that old-fashioned phrase.
What is the latest news ?

LAUZUN.

His majesty.
Dines half an hour before his usual time.
That's the last news at court ! — it makes sensation !

BRAGELONE.

Is there no weightier news ? I heard at Dunkirk
How the King loved a — — loved a certain maiden —
The brave La Vallière's daughter !

LAUZUN.

How, my Lord,

How can you vegetate in such a place?
 I fancy the next tidings heard at Dunkirk
 Will be that — Adam's dead!

BRAGELONE.

The news is old, then?

LAUZUN.

News! *news*, indeed! Why, by this time, our lackeys
 Have worn the gossip threadbare! News! —

BRAGELONE.

The lady

(She is a soldier's child) hath not yet bartered
 Her birthright for ambition? She rejects him?
 Speak! — She rejects him!

LAUZUN.

Humph!

BRAGELONE.

Oh, Duke, I know

This courtier air — this most significant silence —
 With which your delicate race are wont to lie
 Away all virtue! Shame upon your manhood!
 Speak out, and say Louise La Vallière lives
 To prove to courts — that woman *can* be honest!

LAUZUN.

Marquis, you're warm.

BRAGELONE.

You dare not speak! — I knew it!

LAUZUN.

Dare not?

BRAGELONE.

Oh, yes, you dare, with hints and smiles,
 To darken fame — to ruin the defenceless —
 Blight with a gesture — wither with a sneer!
 Did I say 'dare not?' — No man dares it better!

LAUZUN.

My Lord, these words must pass not!

BRAGELONE.

Duke, forgive me!

I am a rough, stern soldier — taught from youth
To brave offence, and by the sword alone
Maintain the licence of my speech. Oh, say —
Say, but one word! — say this poor maid is sinless,
And, for her father's sake — (*her father loved me!*)
I'll kneel to thee for pardon!

LAUZUN.

Good, my Lord,
I know not what your interest in this matter:
'Tis said that Louis loves the fair La Vallière;
But what of that? — good taste is not a crime!
'Tis said La Vallière does not hate the King:
But what of that? — it does but prove her — loyal!
I know no more. I trust you're satisfied;
If not — —

BRAGELONE.

Thou liest!

LAUZUN.

Nay, then, draw!

(*They fight — after a few passes, Lauzun is disarmed.*)

BRAGELONE.

There, take
Thy sword! Alas! each slanderer wears a weapon
No honest arm can baffle — *this* is edgeless. [*Exit.*]

LAUZUN.

Plasant! This comes, now, of one's condescending
To talk with men who cannot understand
The tone of good society. — Poor fellow! [*Exit.*]

S C E N E II.

Enter Mademoiselle de La Vallière.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He loves me, then! He loves me! Love! wild word!
Did I say love? Dishonour, shame, and crime
Dwell on the thought! And yet — and yet — *he loves me!*
(*Re-enter Bragelone, at the back of the Stage. — She
takes out the King's picture.*)

Mine early dreams were prophets! — Steps! The King?

BRAGELONE.

No, lady; pardon me! — a joint mistake;
You sought the King — and *I* Louise La Vallière!

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You here, my Lord! — you here!

BRAGELONE.

There was a maiden

Fairer than many fair; but sweet and humble,
And good and spotless, through the vale of life
She walked, her modest path with blessings strewed;
(For all men bless'd her;) from her crystal name,
Like the breath i' the mirror, even envy passed:
I sought that maiden at the court; none knew her.
May I ask you — where now Louise La Vallière?

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Cruel! — unjust — You were my father's friend,
Dare you speak thus to me?

BRAGELONE.

Dare! dare! — 'Tis well!

You have learnt your state betimes! — —

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My state, my Lord!

I know not by what right you thus assume
The privilege of insult!

BRAGELONE.

Ay, reproach!
The harlot's trick — for shame! Oh, no, your pardon!
You are too high for shame: and so — farewell!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My Lord! — my Lord, in pity — No! — in *justice*,
Leave me not thus!

BRAGELONE.

Louise!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Have they belied me?
Speak, my good Lord! — What crime have I committed?

BRAGELONE.

No crime — at courts! 'Tis only Heaven and Honour
That deem it aught but — most admired good fortune!
Many, who swept in careless pride before
The shrinking, spotless, timorous La Vallière,
Will now fawn round thee, and with bended knees
Implore sweet favour of the King's kind mistress.
Ha! ha! — this is not crime! Who calls it crime?
Do prudes say 'Crime?' Go, bribe them, and they'll swear
It's name is greatness. Crime indeed! — ha! ha!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My heart finds words at length! — 'Tis false!

BRAGELONE.

'Tis false!

Why, speak again! Say once more it is false —
'Tis *false*! — again, 'tis *false*!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O God, I'm wretched!

BRAGELONE.

No, lady, no! not wretched, if not guilty!

(Mademoiselle de La Vallière, after walking to and fro in great agitation, seats herself on one of the benches of the garden, and covers her face with her hands.)

BRAGELONE *(aside.)*

Are these the tokens of remorse? No matter!

I loved her well! — And love is pride, not love,

If it forsake ev'n guilt amidst its sorrows!

(Aloud.) Louise! Louise! — Speak to thy friend, Louise!

Thy father's friend! — thine own!

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

This hated court!

Why came I hither? — Wherefore have I closed

My heart against its own most pleading dictates?

Why clung to virtue, if the brand of vice

Sear my good name? —

BRAGELONE.

That, when thou pray'st to God,

Thy soul may ask for *comfort* — not *forgiveness*!

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE *(rising eagerly.)*

A blessed thought! — I thank thee!

BRAGELONE.

Thou art innocent!

Thou hast denied the King?

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I *have* denied him!

BRAGELONE.

Curs'd be the lies that wrong'd thee! — doubly curst

The hard, the icy selfishness of soul,

That, but to pander to an hour's caprice,

Blasted that flower of life — fair fame! Accurst
The King who casts his purple o'er his vices!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Hold! — thou malign'st thy king!

BRAGELONE.

He spared not thee.

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

The king — God bless him!

BRAGELONE.

Wouldst thou madden me?
Thou! — No — thou lov'st him not? — thou bid'st thy face!
Woman, thou tremblest! Lord of Hosts, for this
Hast thou preserved me from the foeman's sword,
And through the incarnadined and raging seas
Of war upheld my steps? — made life and soul
The sleepless priests to that fair idol — Honour?
Was it for this? — I loved thee not, Louise,
As gallants love! Thou wert this life's IDEAL,
Breathing through earth the Lovely and the Holy,
And clothing Poetry in human beauty!
When in this gloomy world they spoke of sin,
I thought of thee, and smiled — for thou wert sinless!
And when they told of some diviner act
That made our nature noble, my heart whispered —
'So would have done Louise!' — 'Twas thus I loved thee!
To lose thee, I can bear it; but to lose,
With thee, all hope, all confidence, of virtue —
This — *this* is hard! — Oh! I am sick of earth!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Nay, speak not thus! — be gentle with me. Come,
I am not what thou deem'st me, Bragelone;
Woman I am, and weak. Support, advise me!

Forget the lover, but be still the friend.

Do not desert me — *thou*!

BRAGELONE.

Thou lov'st the King!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

But I can fly from love!

BRAGELONE.

Poor child! And whither?

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Take me to the old castle, to my mother!

BRAGELONE.

The king can reach thee there!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

He'll not attempt it.

Alas! in courts, how quickly men forget!

BRAGELONE.

Not till their victim hath surrendered all!

Hadst thou but yielded, why thou mightst have lived

Beside his very threshold, safe, unheeded;

But thus, with all thy bloom of heart unrifled, —

The fortress stormed, not conquered, — why man's pride,

If not man's lust, would shut thee from escape!

Art thou in earnest, — wouldst thou truly fly

From gorgeous infamy to tranquil honour,

God's house alone may shelter thee!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Alas! alas! to meet those eyes no more!

Never to hear that voice!

BRAGELONE (*departing.*)

Enough.

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Yet, stay!

I'll see him once! one last farewell — and then —
Yes, to the convent!

BRAGELONE.

I have done! — and yet,
Ere I depart, take back the scarf thou gav'st me
Then didst 'thou honour worth!' now, gift and giver
Alike are worthless!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Worthless! Didst thou hear me?
Have I not said that ——

BRAGELONE.

Thou wouldst see the King!
Vice first, and virtue after! O'er the marge
Of the abyss thou tremblest! One step more,
And from all heaven the Angels shall cry 'Lost!'
Thou ask'st that single step! Wouldst thou be saved,
Lose not a moment! — Come!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*in great agony.*)

Beside that tree,
When stars shone soft, he vowed for aye to love me!

BRAGELONE.

Think of thy mother! At this very hour
She blesses God that thou wert born — the last
Fair scion of a proud and stainless race!
To-morrow, and thy shame may cast a shade
Over a hundred 'scutcheons, and thy mother
Feel thou wert born that *she* might long to die!
Come!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I am ready — take my hand!

(*Her eye falls on the bracelet.*)

Away!

This is his gift! And shall I leave him thus?
Not one kind word to break the shock of parting —

BRAGELONE.

And break a mother's heart!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Be still! Thou'rt man!

Thou canst not feel as woman feels! — her weakness
Thou canst not sound! O Louis, Heaven protect thee!
May Fate look on thee with La Vallière's eyes!
Now I am ready, sir! Thou'st seen how weak
Woman is ever where she loves. *Now*, learn,
Proportioned to that weakness is the strength
With which she conquers love! — O Louis! Louis!
Quick, take me hence! —

BRAGELONE.

The heart she wrongs hath saved her!
And is that all! — The shelter for mine age —
The Hope that was the garner for Affection —
The fair and lovely tree, beneath whose shade
The wearied soldier thought to rest at last.
And watch life's sun go calm and cloudless down,
Smiling the day to sleep — all, all lie shattered!
No matter! I have saved thy soul from sorrow,
Whose hideous depth thy vision cannot fathom.
Joy! — I have saved thee!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Ah! when last we parted,
I told thee, of thy love I was not worthy.
Another shall replace me!

BRAGELONE (*smiling sadly.*)

Hush! Another!
No! — See, I wear thy colours still! — Though Hope

Wanes from the plate, the dial still remains,
 And takes no light from stars! I — I am nothing!
 But thou — Nay, weep not! Yet these tears are honest:
 Thou hast not lived to make the Past one blot,
 Which life in vain would weep away! Poor maiden!
 I could not cheer thee *then*. *Now*, joy! I've saved thee!
[*Exeunt*.]

S C E N E III.

*The King's Cabinet at Fontainebleau; * the King seated
 at a table, covered with papers, &c., writing.*

Enter Lauzun.

LOUIS.

Lauzun, I sent for you. Your zeal has served me,
 And I am grateful. There, this order gives you
 The lands and lordship of De Vesci.

LAUZUN.

Sire,

How shall I thank your goodness?

LOUIS.

Hush! — by silence!

LAUZUN (*aside*.)

A king's forbidden fruit has pretty windfalls!

LOUIS.

This beautiful Louise! I never loved
 Till now.

* To some it may be interesting to remember that this cabinet, in which the most powerful of the Bourbon kings is represented as rewarding the minister of his pleasures, is the same as that in which is yet shewn the table upon which Napoleon Bonaparte (son of a gentleman of Corsica) signed the abdication of the titles and the dominions of Charlemagne!

LAUZUN.

She yields not yet?

LOUIS.

But gives refusal

A voice that puts ev'n passion to the blush
To own one wish so soft a heart denies it!

LAUZUN.

A woman's No! is but a crooked path
Unto a woman's Yes! Your Majesty
Saw her to-day?

LOUIS.

No! — Grammont undertakes
To bear, in secret, to her hand, some lines
That pray a meeting. — I await his news.

*(Continues writing.)*LAUZUN (*aside*)

I'll not relate my tilt with Bragelone.
First, I came off the worst. — No man of sense
Ever confesses that! And, secondly,
This most officious, curious, hot brained Quixote
Might make him jealous; jealous kings are peevish;
And, if he fall to questioning the lady,
She'll learn who told the tale, and spite the teller,
Oh! the great use of logic!

LOUIS.

'Tis in vain

I strive by business to beguile impatience!
How my heart beats! — Well, Count!

Enter Grammont.

GRAMMONT.

Alas! my Liege!

LOUIS.

Alas! — Speak out!

GRAMMONT.

The court has lost La Vallière!

LOUIS.

Ha! — lost!

GRAMMONT.

She has fled, and none gues whither.

LOUIS.

Fled!

I'll not believe it! — Fled!

LAUZUN.

What matters, Sire?

No spot is sacred from the king!

LOUIS.

By Heaven

I *am* a king? — Not all the arms of Europe
Could wrest one jewel from my crown. And she —
What is my crown to her? I am a king!
Who stands between the king and her he loves
Becomes a traitor — and may find a tyrant!
Follow me! [*Exit.*

GRAMMONT.

Who e'er heard of maids of honour
Flying from kings?

LAUZUN.

Ah, had *you* been a maid,
How kind you would have been, you rogue! — Come on!
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

Interior of a Convent Chapel; a lofty Crucifix in the centre of the aisle, before which kneels Mademoiselle de La Vallière; Night — Thunder und Lightning, the latter made visible through the long oriel windows.

MADemoisELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE (*rising.*)

Darkly the night sweeps on. No thought of sleep
Steals to my heart. What sleep is to the world
Prayer is to me — life's balm, and grief's oblivion!
Yet, ev'n before the altar of my God,
Unhallowed fire is raging through my veins —
Heav'n on my lips, but earth within my heart —
And while I pray *his* memory prompts the prayer,
And all I ask of Heaven is — 'Guard my Louis!' —
Forget him — *that* I dare not pray! I would not
Ev'n if I could, be happy, and forget him! [*Thunder.*
Roll on, roll on, dark chariot of the storm,
Whose wheels are thunder! — the rack'd elements
Can furnish forth no tempest like the war
Of passions in one weak and erring heart! [*The bell tolls one.*
Hark to night's funeral knell! How through the roar
Of winds and thunder thrills that single sound,
Solemnly audible! — the tongue of time,
In time's most desolate hour! — it bids us muse
On words which love can reach not! Life runs fast
To its last sands! To bed, to bed! — to tears
And wishes for the grave! — to bed, to bed!

[*A trumpet is heard without.*

Two or three Nuns hurry across the stage.

FIRST NUN.

Most strange!

SECOND NUN.

In such a night, too! The great gates,
That ne'er unclose save to a royal guest,
Unbarred!

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE.

What fear, what hope, by turns distracts me!
[*The trumpet sounds again.*]

FIRST NUN.

Hark! in the court, the ring of hoofs! — the door
Creaks on the sullen hinge!

LAUZUN (*without.*)

Make way! — the King!

Enter Louis and Lauzun.

MADEMOISELLE DE LA VALLIÈRE (*rushing forward.*)

Oh, Louis! — oh, lov'd! (*Then pausing abruptly.*)

No, touch me not!

Leave me! in pity leave me! Heavenly Father,
I fly to thee! Protect me from his arms —

Protect me from myself! [*Sinks at the foot of the crucifix.*]

LOUIS.

Oh bliss! — Louise!

Enter Abbess and other Nuns.

ABBESS.

Peace, peace! What clamour desecrates the shrine
And solitudes of God?

LAUZUN.

Madam, your knee —

The King!

ABBESS.

The King! — you mock me, sir!

LOUIS (*quitting Mademoiselle de La Vallière.*)

Behold

Your Sovereign, reverend Mother! We have come

To thank you for your shelter of this lady,
And to reclaim our charge.

ABBESS.

My Liege, these walls
Are sacred even from the purple robe
And sceptred hand.

LOUIS.

She hath not ta'en the vow!
She's free! — we claim her! — she is of our court!
Woman — go to!

ABBESS.

The maiden, Sire, is free!
Your royal lips have said it! — She is free!
And if this shrine her choice, whoe'er compels her
Forth from the refuge, doth incur the curse
The Roman Church awards to even Kings!
Speak, lady! — dost thou claim against the court
The asylum of the cloister?

LOUIS.

Darest thou brave us?

LAUZUN (*aside to Louis.*)

Pardon, my Liege! — reflect! Let not the world
Say that the king —

LOUIS.

Can break his bonds! — Away!
I was a man before I was a king!

(*Approaching Mademoiselle de La Vallière.*)

Lady, we do command your presence! (*Lowering his
voice.*) Sweet!

Adored Louise! — if ever to your ear
My whispers spoke in music — if my life
Be worth the saving, do not now desert me!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE (*clinging to the crucifix.*)
 Let me not hear him, Heaven! — Strike all my senses!
 Make—make me dumb, deaf, blind,—but keep me honest!

ABBESS.

Sire, you have heard her answer!

LOUIS (*advancing passionately, pauses, and then with great dignity.*)

Abbess, no!

This lady was entrusted to our charge —
 A fatherless child! — The King is now her father!
 Madam, we would not wrong you; but we know
 That sometimes most unhallowed motives wake
 Your zeal for converts! — This young maid is wealthy,
 And nobly born! — Such proselytes may make
 A convent's pride, but oft a convent's victims!
 No more! — we claim the right the law awards us,
 Free and alone to commune with this maiden.
 If then her choice go with you — be it so;
 We are no tyrant! Peace! — retire!

ABBESS.

My Liege!

Forgive —

LOUIS.

We do! — Retire!

(*Lauzun, the Abbess, &c., withdraw.*)

LOUIS.

We are alone!

MADemoiselle DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Alone! — No! God is present, and the conscience!

LOUIS.

Ah! fear'st thou, then, that heart that would resign
 Ev'n love itself to guard one pang from thee?

MADemoiselle de la Vallière (*rising, but still with one arm clinging in the crucifix.*)

I *must* speak! — Sire, if every drop of blood
Were in itself a life, I'd shed them all
For one hour's joy to thee! — But fame and virtue —
My father's grave — my mother's lonely age —
These, these — [Thunder.

I hear their voice! — the fires of Heaven
Seem to me like the eyes of angels, and
Warn me against myself! — Farewell!

LOUIS.

Louise,
I will not hear thee! What! farewell? that word
Sounds like a knell to all that's worth the living!
Farewell! why, then, farewell all peace to Louis
And the poor King is once more but a thing
Of state and forms. The impulse and the passion —
The blessed air of happy human life —
The all that made him envy not his subjects
Dies in that word! Ah, canst thou — dar'st thou say it?

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Oh, speak not thus! — Speak harshly! — threat: com-
mand! —

Be all the King!

LOUIS.

The king! he kneels to thee! [*Lightning.*

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Not there! — not at the cross! — the angry lightning,
See how it darts around! — not there!

LOUIS (*passing his arm round her.*)

So ever

Would this heart guard thine own!

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

In mercy leave me!
I'm weak — be generous! My own soul betrays me;
But *thou* betray me not!

LOUIS.

Nay, hear me, sweet one! —
Desert me not this once, and I will swear
To know no guiltier wish — to curb my heart —
To banish hope from love — and nurse no dream
Thy spotless soul itself shall blush to cherish?
Hear me, Louise — thou lov'st me?

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Love thee, Louis!

LOUIS.

Thou lov'st me, — then confide! Who loves, *trusts* ever!
(*Mademoiselle de La Vallière has insensibly let go her
hold of the cross, and now placing her hand on his
arm, looks him in the face.*)

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

Trust thee! — ah! *dare* I?

LOUIS (*clasping her in his arms.*)

Ay, till death! What ho!

Lauzun! I say!

Enter Lauzun.

MADemoiselle de la Vallière.

(*Endeavouring again to cling to the cross.*)

No, no!

LOUIS.

Not trust me, dearest?

(*She falls on his shoulder — the Abbess and Nuns advance.*)

ABBESS.

Still firm!

LAUZUN.

No, Madam! — Way, there, for the King!

ACT III.

SCENE I.

An Ante-Chamber in the Palace of Madame la Duchesse de La Vallière at Versailles.

Enter Lauzun and Madame de Montespan, at opposite doors.

LAUZUN.

Ha! my fair friend, well met! — how fares Athenè?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Weary with too much gaiety! Now, tell me,
Do *you* ne'er tire of splendor? Does this round
Of gaudy pomps — this glare of glitt'ring nothings —
Does it ne'er pall upon you? To my eyes
'Tis as the earth would be if turfed with scarlet,
Without one spot of green.

LAUZUN.

We all feel thus
Until we are used to it. Art has grown *my* nature,
And if I see green fields, or ill-dressed people,
I cry 'how artificial!' With me, '*Nature*'
Is 'Paris and Versailles.' The word, 'a man,'
Means something noble, that one sees at court.
Woman's the thing Heaven made for wearing trinkets
And talking scandal. That's my state of nature!
You'll like it soon; you have that temper which
Makes courts its element.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And how? — define, Sir.

LAUZUN.

First, then — but shall I not offend?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Be candid.

I'd know my faults, to make them look like virtues.

LAUZUN.

First, then, Athenè, you've an outward frankness.

Deceit in you looks honester than truth.

Thoughts, at a court, like faces on the stage,

Require some rouge. You rouge your thoughts so well

That one would deem their only fault, that nature

Gave them too bright a bloom!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Proceed!

LAUZUN.

Your wit,

Is of the true court breed — it plays with nothings;

Just bright enough to warm, but never burn —

Excites the dull, but ne'er offends the vain.

You have much energy; it looks like feeling!

Your cold ambition seems an easy impulse;

Your head most ably counterfeits the heart,

But never, like the heart, betrays itself!

Oh! you'll succeed at court! — you see I know you!

Not so this new-made Duchess — young La Vallière.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The weak, fond, fool!

LAUZUN.

Yes, weak — *she* has a heart;

Yet *you*, too, love the King!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And she does *not*!

She loves but *Louis* — I but love the *King*:

Pomp, riches, state, and power — these who would love not?

LAUZUN.

Bravo! well said! — Oh, you'll succeed at court!
 I knew it well! it was for this I chose you —
 Induced your sapient lord to waste no more
 Your beauty in the shade — for this prepared
 The Duchess to receive you to her bosom,
 Her dearest friend; for this have duly fed
 The King's ear with your praise, and cleared your way
 To rule a sovereign and to share a throne.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

I know thou hast been my architect of power;
 And, when the pile is built —

LAUZUN (*with a smile.*)

Could still o'erthrow it,
 If thou couldst play the ingrate!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

I! — nay!

LAUZUN.

Hear me!

Each must have need of each. Long live the King!
 Still let his temples ache beneath the crown.
 But all that kings can give — wealth, rank, and power—
 Must be for *us* — the King's friend and his favourite.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

But is it easy to supplant the Duchess?
 All love La Vallière! Her meek nature shrinks
 Ev'n from our homage; and she wears her state
 As if she pray'd the world to pardon greatness.

LAUZUN.

And thus destroys herself! At court, Athenè,
 Vice, to win followers, takes the front of virtue,
 And looks the dull plebeian things called *moral*
 To scorn, until they blush to be unlike her.

Why is De Lauzun not her friend? Why plotting
 For a new rival? Why? — Because De Lauzun
 Wins not the power he looked for from her friendship!
 She keeps not old friends! — and she makes no new ones!
 For who would be a friend to one who deems it
 A crime to ask his Majesty a favour?

'*Friends*' is a phrase at Court that means *Promotion*!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Her folly, I confess, would not be mine.
 But, grant her faults — the King still loves the Duchess!

LAUZUN.

Since none are by, I'll venture on a treason,
 And say, the King's a man! — and men will change!
 I have his ear, and you shall win his eye.
 'Gainst a new face, and an experienced courtier,
 What chance hath this poor, loving, simple woman?
 Besides, she has too much conscience for a king!
 He likes not to look up, and feel how low,
 Ev'n on the throne that overlooks the world,
 His royal greatness dwarfs beside that heart
 That never stooped to sin, save when it loved him!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You're eloquent, my Lord!

LAUZUN.

Ah! of such natures
 You and I know but little! — (*Aside.*) This must cease,
 Or I shall all disclose my real aims!
 (*Aloud.*) The King is with the Duchess?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Yes!

LAUZUN.

As yet
 She doth suspect you not?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Suspect! — the puppet!

No ; but full oft, her head upon my bosom,
Calls me her truest friend! — invites me ever
To amuse the King with my enlivening sallies, —
And still breaks off, in sighing o'er the past,
To wish her spirit were as blithe as mine,
And fears her Louis wearies of her sadness!

LAUZUN.

So, the plot ripens! — ere the King came hither,
I had prepared his royal pride to chafe
At that sad face, whose honest sorrow wears
Reproach unconsciously! You'll learn the issue!
Now, then, farewell! — we understand each other! [*Exit.*

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

And once I loved this man! — and still might love him,
But that I love ambition! Yes, my steps
Now need a guide; but once upon the height,
And I will have no partner! Thou, lord Duke,
With all thine insolent air of proud protection,
Thou shalt wait trembling on my nod, and bind
Thy fortune to my wheels! O man! — vain man!
Well sung the poet, — when this power of beauty
Heaven gave our sex, it gave the only sceptre
Which makes the world a slave! And I will wield it! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

*The Scene opens and discovers the King and the Duchess
de La Vallière at chess.*

LOUIS.

But one move more!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Not so! I check the king!

LOUIS.

A vain attempt! — the king is too well guarded!
There! — check again! Your game is lost!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

As usual,

Ev'n from this mimic stage of war you rise
Ever the victor. (*They leave the table and advance.*)

LOUIS.

'Twere a fairer fortune,
My own Louise, to reconcile the vanquished!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*sadly.*)

My best-loved Louis!

LOUIS.

Why so sad a tone?

Nay, smile, Louise! — love thinks himself aggrieved
If care cast shadows o'er the heart it seeks
To fill with cloudless sunshine! Smile, Louise!
Ev'n unkind words were kinder than sad looks.
There — *now* thou glad'st me!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yet ev'n thou, methought,
Did'st wear, this morn, a brow on which the light
Shone less serenely than its wont!

LOUIS.

This morn!

Ay, it is true! — this morn I heard that France
Hath lost a subject monarchs well might mourn!
Oh! little know the world how much a king,
Whose life is past in *purchasing* devotion,
Loses in one who merited all favour
And scorned to ask the least! A king, Louise,
Sees but the lackeys of mankind. The true

Lords of our race — the high chivalric hearts —
 Nature's nobility — alas! are proud,
 And stand aloof, lest slaves should say they flatter!
 Of such a mould was he whom France deplores.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Tell me his name, that I, with thee, may mourn him.

LOUIS.

A noble name, but a more noble bearer;
 Not to be made by, but to make, a lineage.
 Once, too, at Dunkirk, 'twixt me and the foe,
 He thrust his gallant breast, already seared
 With warrior-wounds, and *his* blood flowed for mine
 Dead! — his just merits all unrecompensed! —
 Obscured, like sun-light, by the suppliant clouds!
 He should have died a marshal! Death did wrong
 To strike so soon! Alas, brave Bragelone!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ha! — did I hear aright, my Liege — my Louis?
 That name — that name! — thou saidst not 'Bragelone?'

LOUIS.

Such was his name not often heard at court.
 Thou didst not know him? What! thou art pale! thou
 weapest! —
 Thou art ill! Louise, look up! [*He leads her to a seat.*]

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Be still, O Conscience!

I did not slay him! — Died *too soon*! Alas!
 He should have died with all his hopes unblighted,
 Ere I was — what I am!

LOUIS.

What mean these words?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

How did death strike him? — what disease?

LOUIS.

I know not.

He had retired from service; and in peace
 Breathed out his soul to some remoter sky!
 France only guards his fame! What was he to thee
 That thou shouldst weep for him?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hast thou ne'er heard
 We were betrothed in youth?

LOUIS (*agitated and aside.*)

Lauzun speaks truth!
 I'd not her virgin heart — she lov'd another!
 (*Aloud.*) Betrothed! You mourn him deeply!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, I do!
 That broken heart! — I was its dream — its idol!
 And with regret is mingled — what repentance!

LOUIS (*coldly.*)

Repentance, Madam! Well, the word is gracious!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Pardon! oh, pardon! But the blow was sudden;
 How can the heart play courtier with remorse?

LOUIS.

Remorse! — again. Why be at once all honest,
 And say you love me not!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Not love you, Louis?

LOUIS.

Not if you feel repentance to have loved!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

What! think'st thou, Louis, I should love thee more
 Did I love virtue less, or less regret it?

LOUIS.

I pray you truce with these heroic speeches;
They please us in romance — in life they weary.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Louis, do I deserve this?

LOUIS.

Rather, Lady,

Do *I* deserve the mute reproach of sorrow?
Still less these constant, never-soothed complaints —
This waiting-woman jargon of '*lost virtue*.'

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, this from you?

LOUIS.

Why, oft — could others hear thee —
Well might they deem thee some poor village Phœbe,
Whom her false Lubin had deceived, and left,
Robb'd of her only dower! and not the great
Duchess La Vallière, in our realm of France
Second to none but our anointed race;
The envy of the beauty and the birth
Of Europe's court — our city of the world!
Is it so great disgrace, Louise La Vallière,
To wear, unrivalled, in thy breast, the heart
Of Bourbon's latest, nor her least, of Kings.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, when you deigned to love me, I had hoped
You knew the sunshine of your royal favour
Had fallen on a lowly flower. Let others
Deem that the splendor consecrates the sin!
I'd loved thee with as pure and proud a love,
If thou hadst been the poorest cavalier
That ever served a King — thou know'st it, Louis!

LOUIS.

I would not have it so! my fame, my glory,
 The purple and the orb, are part of me;
 And thou shouldst love them for my sake, and feel
 I were not Louis were I less the King.
 Still weeping! Fie! I tell thee tears freeze back
 The very love I still would bear to thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Would '*still!*' — didst thou say '*still?*'

LOUIS.

Come, lady!

Woman, to keep her empire o'er the heart,
 Must learn its nature — mould unto its bias —
 And rule, by never differing from our humours.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I'll school my features, teach my lips to smile,
 Be all thou wilt; but say not '*still,*' dear Louis!

LOUIS.

Well, well! no further words; let peace be with us.
 (*Aside.*) By Heaven, she weeps with yet intenser passion!
 It must be that she loved this Bragelone,
 And mourns the loftier fate that made her mine!
 (*Aloud.*) This gallant soldier, Madam, your betrothed,
 Hath some share in your tears?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Oh, name him not;

My tears are all unworthy dew to fall
 Upon a tomb so honoured!

LOUIS.

Grant me patience!

These senses are very tedious, fair La Vallière.
 In truth, we kings have, in the council chamber,
 Enough to make us tearful; — in the bower
 We would have livelier subject to divert us.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Again forgive me! I am sick at heart;
I pray you pardon; — these sad news have marred
The music of your presence, and have made me
Fit but for solitude. I pray you, Sire,
Let me retire; and when again I greet you,
I'll wear the mien you'd have me!

LOUIS.

Be it so!

Let me no more disturb you from your thoughts;
They must be sad. So brave — and your betrothed!
Your grief becomes you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You forgive me, Louis?

We do not part unkindly?

LOUIS.

Fair one, no! [*Exit La Vallière.*]

LOUIS.

She was my first love, and my fondest. — *Was!*
Alas, the word must come! — I love her yet,
But love wanes glimmering to that twilight — friendship!
Grant that she never loved this Bragelone;
Still, tears and sighs make up dull interludes
In passion's short-lived drama! She is good,
Gentle, and meek, — and I do think she loves me,
(A truth no King is sure of!) — But, in fine,
I have begun to feel the hours are long
Pass'd in her presence; what I hotly sought
Coldly I weary of. I'll seek De Lauzun:
I like his wit — I almost like his knavery;
It never makes us yawn, like high-flown virtues.
Thirst, hunger, rest — these are the wants of peasants:
A curtier's wants are titles, place and gold;

But a poor king, who has these wants so sated,
Has only one want left — to be amused! [*Exit.*]

SCENE III.

Re-enter the Duchess de La Vallière.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Louis! dear Louis! — Gone! alas! — and left me
Half in displeasure! — I was wrong, methinks,
To — no! — I was not wroth to *feel* remorse,
But wrong to give it utterance!

Enter Madame de Montespan.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What! alone,

Fair friend? I thought the King —

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Has gone, in anger;

Cold, and in anger.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What, with *thee*, dear Lady?

On the smooth surface of that angel meekness
I should have thought no angry breath could linger.
But men and kings are —

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hush! I was to blame.

The King's all goodness. Shall I write to him?
Letters have not our looks — and, oh, one look!
How many hardest hearts one look hath won
A life consumed in words had wooed in vain!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

To-night there is high revel at the court;
There you may meet your truant King.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

To-night!

An age! — How many hours to night?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You know

My office makes my home the royal palace;
I serve the Queen, and thus shall see your Louis
Ere the sun set.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You! — happy *you*!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Perchance,

(The King is ever gracious to your friends,
And knows me of the nearest), I might whisper,
Though with less sweet a tone, your message to him,
And be your dove, and bear you back the olive?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My kind Athenè!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Nay, 'tis yours the kindness,
To wear my love so near your heart. But, tell me,
Since you accept my heraldry, the cause
Of strife between you in this court of Love.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Alas! I know not — save that I offended!
The wherefore boots the heart that loves to know?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Not much, I own, the poor defendant — woman,
But much the advocate; I need the brief.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Methinks his kingly nature chafes to see
It cannot rule the conscience as the heart!
But, tell him, ever henceforth I will keep
Sad thoughts for lonely hours. — Athenè, tell him,
That if he smile once more upon Louise,

The smile shall never pass from that it shines on ;
Say—but I'll write myself. (*Sits down to the table and writes.*)

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

What need of schemes —
Lauzun's keen wit — Athenè's plotting spirit?
She weaves herself the web that shall ensnare her!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

There; back these feeble words with all thy beauty,
Thy conquering eyes, and thy bewitching smile.
Sure never suit can fail with such a pleader!
And now a little while to holier sadness,
And thine accusing memory, Bragelone!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Whom speak you of? — the hero of the Fronde?
Who seemed the last of the old Norman race,
And half preserved to this degenerate age
The lordly shape the ancient Bayards wore!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You praise him well! He was my father's friend,
And should have been his son. We were affianced,
And — but no more! Ah! cruel, cruel Louis!
You mourned for him — how much more cause have I!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*quickly.*)

What! he is dead? your grief the king resented?
Knew he your troth had thus been plighted?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes;
And still he seemed to deem it sin to mourn him!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

A clue — another clue — that I will follow,
Until it lead me to the throne! — (*Aloud.*) Well, cheer thee;
Trust your true friend: rely on my persuasion.
Methinks I never tasked its powers till now.

Farewell, and fear not! Oh! I'll plead your cause,
 As if myself the client! — (*Aside.*) Thou art sentenced!
 [*Exit Madame de Montespan.*]

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Tis a sweet solace still to have a friend —
 A friend in *woman*! Oh, to what a reed
 We bind our destinies, when man we love!
 Peace, honour, conscience lost — if I lose him,
 What have I left? How sinks my heart within me!
 I'll to my chamber; there the day of tears
 Learns night to smile! — *And I'm the thing they envy!* *
 [*Exit.*]

SCENE IV.

*The Gardens of Versailles — Lauzun, Grammont, and
 Courtiers.*

LAUZUN.

'Tis now the hour in which our royal master
 Honours the ground of his rejoicing gardens
 By his illustrious footsteps! — there, my lords,
 That is the true style-courtier!

GRAMMONT.

Out upon you!
 Your phrase would suit some little German prince,
 Of fifteen hundred quarterings and five acres,
 And not the world's great Louis! 'Tis the hour

* In representation, the actress who may perform the Duchess de La Vallière will pardon me for observing, that the words in italics should be said, not *ironically*, but with a kind of sad and patient wonder. She should appear lost in amazed abstraction at the contrast between her real feelings and the envy she excites, and wake from it with a slight start and smile. And, in one word, now that I am on that subject, the actress should remember that the very soul of La Vallière's character is simplicity; and that there are few passages in which the *natural* tone of voice will not be more suitable and more effective than the declamatory.

When Phœbus shrinks abashed, and all the stars
Envy the day that it beholds the King!
(*To them Marquis de Montespan, in bright scarlet hose.*)

MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN.

Most beautiful! You have a turn of thought,
A taste, a sentiment, so chaste and noble!
Oh, I am charmed — enraptured!

LAUZUN.

You here, Marquis!
Why, you make Grammont blush. Such praise from you
Will turn his bashful brain! Dear Montespan,
You are the glass of fashion! Heavens, what stockings!
The exquisite man!

MONTESPAN.

I' faith, methinks they're pretty.

LAUZUN.

Pretty! — if I were married, 'troth, my Duchess
Should keep her train at a respectful distance;
You'd set it on a blaze! You walk the earth
Like Cupid mounted on a pair of flambeaux!
Oh, you're a dangerous man!

MONTESPAN.

So says my wife,
And begs me not to come too near her — lest
She love me too outrageously! At courts,
People of quality must be decorons;
'Tis not the mode to seem adored too much.

LAUZUN.

Your wife's an angel! *A propos*, dear Marquis;
You see a friend's advice was worth the taking;
Your lady's all the rage; — the King admires her.

MONTESPAN.

The King! — I'm in despair — I mean, dear Duke,
I am enraptured! — hum! —

LAUZUN.

You are not jealous!

MONTESPAN.

Zounds! — jealous! — no!

LAUZUN.

No Marquis can be jealous!

MONTESPAN.

Not of a count or baron; but a king!
S'death, if I thought it — were my honour touched,
An' it were fifty kings —

Enter Louis.

LOUIS.

Good day, my Lords!

Pray you be covered. Well! — what says the Marquis
Of fifty kings?

MONTESPAN.

I — I — I'm in despair!

LAUZUN.

That fifty kings would never make one Louis!

LOUIS.

Go to, thou flatterer! Harkye, dear De Lauzun.

[Exeunt the Courtiers, as the King takes Lauzun aside.]

MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

My wife said right; this worthy duke has got
The true court politesse! — He lies divinely:

[Exit Montespan.]

LAUZUN.

This Montespan I own is wondrous silly;
But he has one good quality — his wife!

LOUIS.

That's true! — a charming face!

LAUZUN.

Ah! had she heard you,
Your Majesty had made one blissful subject.

LOUIS.

Nay, Lauzun, nay!

LAUZUN.

Her soul is like the Persian,
And on the loftiest eminence hath built
A shrine of fire But, pardon me, my Liege;
I had forgot, your royal taste prefers
Natures that love less warmly — though as well.

LOUIS.

Hem! — But, in truth, this lady's worth the loving;
And, by mine honour, while we speak, she comes!
A happy fortune.

Enter Madame de Montespan.

LAUZUN (*archly.*)

Sire, may I withdraw?

LOUIS.

Some message from the Queen; why — as thou wilt.

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

Methinks it may be as I will. [*Exit Lauzun.*

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

(*Appearing for the first time to perceive Louis.*)

The King!

(*Salutes him, and passes on.*)

LOUIS.

Fair Madam, we had hoped you with you brought
Some bright excuse to grace our cheerless presence
With a less short-lived light! You dawn upon us
Only to make us more regret your setting.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Sire, if I dared, I would most gladly hail
A few short moments to arrest your presence,
And rid me of a soft, yet painful duty.

LOUIS.

'Tis the first time, be sure, so sweet a voice
E'er crav'd a sanction for delighting silence.
Speak on, we pray thee!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Gracious Sire, the Duchess,
Whom you have lately left, she fears, in anger,
Besought me to present this letter to you.

LOUIS (*takes the letter, and aside.*)

She blushes while she speaks! — 'Tis passing strange,
I ne'er remarked those darkly-dreaming eyes,
That melt in their own light!

(Reads, and carelessly puts up the letter.)

It scarcely suits
Her dignity, and ours, to choose a witness
To what hath chanced between us. She is good;
But her youth, spent in some old country castle,
Knows not the delicate spirit of a court.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

She bade me back her suit. Alas! my Liege,
Who can succeed, if fair La Vallière fail?

LOUIS.

She bade thee? — she was prudent! Were I woman,
And loved, I'd not have chosen such a herald.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Love varies in its colours with all tempers;
The Duchess is too proud to fear a rival,
Too beautiful to find one. May I take
Some word of comfort back to cheer her sadness?
Made doubly deep by thoughts of your displeasure,
And grief for a dear friend.

LOUIS.

Aye, *that's* the sadness!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

He was a gallant lord, this Bragelone,
And her betrothed. Perchance in youth she loved him.
Ere the great sun had quenched the morning star!

LOUIS.

She loved him! — think'st thou so?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Indeed I know not;
But I have heard her eloquent in praise,
And seen her lost in woe. You will forgive her!

LOUIS.

Forgive her? — there's no cause!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Now, bless you, Sire,
For that one word. My task is done.

LOUIS.

Already?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

What can I more? Oh, let me hasten back!
What rapture must be hers who can but fill
An atom of the heart of godlike Louis!

How much more the whole soul! — To lose thy love
Must be, not grief, but some sublime despair
Like that the Roman felt who lost a world!

LOUIS.

By Heaven, she fires me! — a brave, royal spirit,
Worthy to love a king!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

To know thee hers,
What pride! — what glory! Though all earth cried 'Shame!' —
Earth could not sill the trumpet at her heart,
That, with its swelling and exultant voice,
Told her the earth was but the slave of Louis.
And *she* the partner! And, O hour of dread!
When (for the hour must come) some fairer form
Shall win thee from her — still, methinks, 'twould be
A boast to far posterity to point
To all the trophies piled about thy throne,
And say — 'He loved me once!' O Sire your pardon;
I am too bold.

LOUIS.

Why, this were love, indeed,
Could we but hope to win it. And such love
Would weave the laurel in its wreaths of myrtle.
Beautiful lady! while thou speaks't, I dream
What love should be, — and feel where love is not!
Thou com'st the suitor, to remain the judge;
And I could kneel to thee for hope and mercy.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Ah, no! — ah, no! — she is my friend. And if
She love not as I love — I mean, I *might* love —
Still she *believes* she loves thee. Tempt me not.
Who could resist thee! Sire, farewell! [Exit.

LOUIS.

Her voice
 Is hush'd; but still its queen-like music lingers
 In my rapt ears. I dreamt Louise had loved me;
 She who felt love disgrace! Before the true,
 How the tame counterfeit grows pale and lifeless.
 By the sad brow of yon devout La Vallière
 I feel a man, and fear myself a culprit!
 But this high spirit wakes in mine the sense
 Of what it is — I *am* that Louis whom
 The world has called 'The Great!' — and in her pride
 Mirror mine own. This jaded life assumes
 The zest, the youth, the glory of *excitement*!
 To-night we meet again; — speed fast, dull hours!
[Exit.

SCENE V.

Grand Saloon in the Palace of Versailles; in the back ground the suite of Apartments is seen in perspective — the Queen seated to the left of the stage; some of the Ladies of the blood royal seated also, but on stools — many Ladies standing round.

Several Ladies enter, one by one salute the Queen, and pass on the front of the stage — the Queen half rises to each, and appears to address them in passing, but in dumb show.

FIRST LADY.

How graciously the Queen receives the Guiches!

SECOND LADY.

See, fair La Tremouille's again in favour!

THIRD LADY.

Hush! Lo, the star that rarely gilds the nights
 Of the court-heaven — the beautiful La Vallière!

*Enter the Duchess de La Vallière — salutes the Queen,
who half turns her back upon her in silence.*

FIRST LADY.

Saw you the Queen's marked rudeness!

SECOND LADY.

Tush! the Queen

Is but a cypher! 'tis the King alone

Whose smile makes up the sum of royal favour.

THIRD LADY.

You're right; and while that smile is still La Vallière's,
She is the real Queen. How say you, Ladies?

Shall we not pay our court to her?

*(The Ladies crowd round the Duchess, and appear to
render her the most reverential homage, which she
receives with humility and embarrassment.)*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

These smiles

Cannot efface that injured woman's frown.

Oh, how the heart that wrong'd avenges her!

*Enter Lauzun, Marquis de Montespan, and several
Courtiers, who after saluting the Queen, surround
the Duchess de La Vallière with still greater homage.*

FIRST COURTIER. (*Approaching the Duchess de La Vallière.*)

Madam, your goodness is to France a proverb!

If I might dare request, this slight memorial

You would convey to our most gracious Master?

The rank of colonel in the royal guard

Is just now vacant. True, I have not served;

But I do trust my valour is well known:

I've killed three noted swordsmen in a duel! —

And, for the rest, a word from you were more

Than all the laurels Holland gave to others.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My Lord, forgive me! I might ill deserve
The friendship of a monarch, if, forgetting,
That honours are the attributes of merit; —
And they who sell the service of the public
For the false coin, soft smiles and honeyed words,
Forge in the ante-chambers of a palace,
Defraud a people to degrade a king!
If you have merits, let *them* plead for you;
Nor ask in whispers what you claim from justice.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*to first Courtier, as the Duchess de La Vallière turns away.*)

Give me the paper. Hush! the King shall see it. ↓

Music.

Enter the King, Grammont, and other Courtiers. He pauses by the Queen, and accosts her respectfully in dumb show.

GRAMMONT (*aside.*)

With what a stately and sublime decorum
His Majesty throws grandeur o'er his foibles!
He not disguises vice; but makes vice kingly —
Most gorgeous of all sensualists!

LAUZUN.

How different
His royal rival in the chase of pleasure,
The spendthrift, sauntering, Second Charles of England!

GRAMMONT.

Ay, Jove to Comus!

LAUZUN.

Silence! Jove approaches!

(*The Queen rises, the crowd breaks up into groups; the King passes slowly from each till he joins the Duchess de La Vallière; the Courtiers retire.*)

LOUIS.

Why, this is well, I thank you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And forgive me?

LOUIS.

Forgive you! You mistake me; wounded feeling
Is not displeasure. Let this pass, Louise.

Your lovely friend has a most heavenly smile!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And a warm heart. In truth, my Liege, I'm glad
You see her with my eyes.

LOUIS.

You have no friend
Whose face it glads me more to look upon.

Aside, and gazing on Montespan.

(What thrilling eyes!) — (*Aloud.*) My thanks are due to her,
For, with the oil of her mellifluous voice,
Smoothing the waves the passing breeze had ruffled.

*(Joins Madame de Montespan, and leads her through
the crowd to the back of the stage.)*

LAUZUN (*to Marquis de Montespan.*)

Ar'n't you enraptured, Marquis?

MONTESPAN.

Hum!

LAUZUN.

The King
Is very condescending to your lady!

MONTESPAN.

Oh, mighty condescending! How he eyes her!

LAUZUN.

'Tis all for love of you.

MONTESPAN.

I shall despair
If the King mean me shame!

LAUZUN.

He means you honour.

O what a great man you will be, dear Marquis.
Do not forget your friends!

MONTESPAN.

Why, as you say,
'Tis very flattering — and, on second thoughts,
I clearly see I ought to be enraptured!

(Lauzun leaves Montespan, who mingles with the crowd, and should keep out of sight for the rest of the scene, and joins the Duchess de La Vallière.)

LAUZUN.

Your Grace resolves no more to be content
Eclipsing others. You eclipse yourself.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I thought you were a friend, and not a flatterer.

LAUZUN.

Friendship would lose its dearest privilege
If friendship were forbidden to admire!
Why, ev'n the King admires your Grace's friend, —
Told me to-day she was the loveliest lady
The court could boast. Nay, see how, while they speak,
He gazes on her. How his breathing fans
The locks that shade the roses of her cheek!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ha! Nay, be still, my heart.

LAUZUN.

It is but friendship;
But it looks wondrous warm!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He cannot mean it!
And yet — and yet — he lingers on her hand —
He whispers

LAUZUN.

How the gossips gaze and smile!
There'll be much scandal.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Lauzun!—what!—thou think'st not?
No, no, thou canst not think —

LAUZUN.

That courts know treachery,
That women are ambitious, or men false;
I will not think it. Pshaw!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My brain swims round!
Louis, of late, hath been so changed. How fair
She looks to-night! — and, oh, *she* has not fallen!
He comes — he nears us — he has left her. Fie!
My foolish fancies wronged him!

LAUZUN.

The spell works.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

*(As the King quits her, to first Courtier, giving him
back the paper.)*

My Lord, your suit is granted.

FIRST COURTIER.

Blessings, Madam!

(The other Courtiers come round him.)

SECOND COURTIER.

Her influence must be great. I know three dukes
Most pressing for the post.

THIRD COURTIER.

A rising sun,
Worthier of worship than that cold La Vallière.

The King as well, methinks, might have no mistress,
As one by whom no courtier grew the richer.

(*The Courtiers group round Madame de Montespan.*)

LOUIS.

My Lords, you do remember the bright lists
Which in the place termed thenceforth '*The Carrousel.*'*
We some time held? — a knightly tournament
That brought us back the age of the first Francis!

LAUZUN.

Of all your glorious festivals, the greatest!
Who but remembers?

DUCHUSS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Then he wore my colours.

How kind to bring back to my yearning heart
That golden spring-time of our early loves!

LOUIS.

Next week we will revive the heroic pageant.
Proud plumes shall wave, and levelled spears be shivered;
Ourself will take the lists, and do defy
The chivalry of our renowned France,
In honour of that lady of our court
For whom we wear the colours, and the motto
Which suits her best — '*Most bright where all are
brilliant!*'

GRAMMONT.

Oh, a most kingly notion!

LOUIS.

Ere we part,

* The *Place du Carrousel* was so named from a splendid festival given by Louis. On the second day, devoted to knightly games, the King, who appeared in the character of *Roger*, carried off four prizes. All the crown jewels were prodigalized on his arms and the trappings of his horse.

Let each knight choose his colours and his lady.
 Ourselves have set the example.

(The Courtiers mingle with the Ladies, &c.; many Ladies give their colours.)

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*timidly.*)

Oh, my Louis!

I read thy heart; thou hast chosen this device
 To learn thy poor La Vallière to be proud.

Nay, turn not from my blessings. Once before
 You wore my colours, though I gave them not.
 To-night I give them! — Louis loves me still!

(Takes one of the knots from her breast, and presents it.)

LOUIS.

Lady, the noblest hearts in France would beat
 More high beneath your badge. Alas! *my* service
 Is vowed already *here*.

(Turning to Madame de Montespan, and, placing a knot of her colours over his order of the Saint Esprit.)

These are my colours!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

How! How!

(The King converses apart with Madame de Montespan.)

LAUZUN (*to the Duchess de La Vallière.*)

Be calm, your Grace; a thousand eyes
 Are on you. Give the envious crowd no triumph.
 Ah! had *my* fortune won so soft a heart
 I would have — —

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Peace! — Away! Betrayed — Undone!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

*The Gardens at Versailles.**Enter Lauzun.*

LAUZUN.

So far, so prosperous! From the breast of Louis,
The blooming love it bore so long a summer,
Falls like a fruit o'er-ripe; and, in the court,
And o'er the King, this glittering Montespan
Queens it without a rival, — awes all foes,
And therefore makes all friends. State, office, honours,
Reflect her smile, or fade before her frown.
So far, so well! Enough for Montespan.
For Lauzun now! — I love this fair La Vallière,
As well, at least, as woman's worth the loving;
And if the jewel has one trifling flaw,
The gold 'tis set in will redeem the blemish.
The King's no niggard lover; and her wealth
Is vast. I have the total in my tablets —
(Besides estates in Picardy and Provence.)
I'm very poor — my debtors very pressing.
I've robbed the Duchess of a faithless lover,
To give myself a wife, and her a husband.
Wedlock's a holy thing, — and wealth a good one!

Enter Marquis de Montespan.

MONTESPAN.

O Duke, behold a miserable man!

LAUZUN.

What! in despair?

MONTESPAN.

Despair, sir! — that's a thing
That happens every hour! But this — —

LAUZUN.

Take breath.

What is the matter?

MONTESPAN.

Banished from the court!

LAUZUN.

Banished? For what offence?

MONTESPAN.

Because the King
Complains my wife's an angel! and declares
Her health will be affected by my temper.
My temper! — I'm a lamb!

LAUZUN.

Perhaps the King
Is jealous of you?

MONTESPAN.

On my life, you've hit it!
And yet, I never gave him any cause!

Enter Louis.

LOUIS (*to Marquis de Mantespan.*)

You, my Lord, in the precincts of our palace! —
This is too daring.

MONTESPAN.

Oh, your Majesty,
I do beseech your grace. I am most sorry
To have a wife so good. 'Tis not my fault, Sire.

LOUIS.

Silence, my Lord! Your strange and countless follies —
The scenes you make — your loud domestic broils —

Bring scandal on our court. Decorum needs
Your banishment; or, since you cannot live
With your fair lady in harmonious concord,
Leave her in peace, and live alone!

MONTESPAN.

Alas!

There *is* no broil.

LAUZUN (*aside.*)

What, contradict the King!

MONTESPAN.

My wife and I are doves!

LOUIS.†

You *must* perceive
That it were best for both to break a chain
Tou both abhor.

MONTESPAN.

I swear —

LOUIS.

Peace, Marquis! Go!

And for your separate household, which entails
A double cost, our treasurer shall accord you
A hundred thousand crowns.

MONTESPAN.

O generous Monarch!

LOUIS.

Mind, your poor lady, from this hour, is free.
No more. Your exile is revoked. Good day, sir!

MONTESPAN.

A hundred thousand crowns!

LAUZUN.

Begone!

MONTESPAN.

With rapture! [*Exit.*]

LOUIS.

A fool, well rid of. Strange that such a dolt
Should e'er be mated with the bright Athenè.
Pleasure is never stagnant in her presence;
But every breeze of woman's changeful skies
Ripples the stream, and freshens e'en the sunshine.

LAUZUN.

'Tis said, your Majesty, 'that contrast's sweet,
And she you speak of well contrasts another,
Whom once — —

LOUIS.

I loved; and still devoutly honour.
This poor La Vallière! could we will affection,
I would have never changed. And even now
I feel Athenè has but charmed my senses,
And my void heart still murmurs for Louise!
I would we would be friends since now not lovers,
Nor dare be happy while I know her wretched.

LAUZUN.

Wearies she still your Majesty with prayers,
Tender laments, and passionate reproaches?

LOUIS.

Her love outlives its hopes.

LAUZUN.

An irksome task
To witness tears we cannot kiss away,
And with cold friendship freeze the ears of love!

LOUIS.

Most irksome and most bootless!

LAUZUN.

Haply, Sire,
In one so pure, the charm of wedded life

Might lull keen griefs to rest, and curb the love
Thou fl'ist from to the friendship that thou seekest ?

LOUIS.

I've thought of this. The Duke de Longueville loves her,
And hath besought before her feet to lay
His princely fortunes.

LAUZUN (*quickly.*)

Ha ! — and she — —

LOUIS.

Rejects him.

LAUZUN.

Sire, if love's sun, once set, bequeaths a twilight,
'Twould only hover o'er some form whom chance
Had linked with Louis — some one (though unworthy)
Whose presence took a charm from brighter thoughts
That knit it with the past.

LOUIS.

Why, how now, Duke ! —

Thou speak'st not of thyself ?

LAUZUN.

I dare not Sire !

LOUIS.

Ha ! ha ! — poor Lauzun ! — what ! the soft La Vallière
Transfer her sorrowing heart to thee ! Ha ! ha !

LAUZUN.

My name is not less noble than De Longueville's ;
My glory greater, since the world has said
Louis esteems me more.

LOUIS.

Esteems ! No ! — favours !

And thou dost think that she, who shrunk from love,

Lest love were vice, would wed the wildest Lord
That ever laughed at virtue?

LAUZUN.

Sire, you wrong me,
Or else you (pardon me) condemn yourself.
Is it too much for one the King calls friend
To aspire to one the King has call'd — —

LOUIS.

Sir, hold!

I never so malign'd that hapless Lady
As to give *her* the title only due
To such as Montespan, who glories in it —
The *last* my *mistress*; but the first my *victim*:
A nice distinction, taught not in your logic,
Which, but just now, confused esteem and favour.
Go to! we kings are not the dupes you deem us.

LAUZUN (*aside*.)

So high! I'll win La Vallière to avenge me,
And humble this imperial vanity.
(*Aloud*.) Sire, I offend! Permit me to retire,
And mourn your anger; nor presume to guess
Whence came the cause. And, since it seems your *favour*
Made me aspire too high, in that I loved
Where you, Sire, made love noble, and half-dreamed
Might be — nay, *am* not — wholly there disdained —

LOUIS.

How, Duke!

LAUZUN.

I do renounce at once
The haughty vision. Sire, permit my absence.

LOUIS.

Lauzun, thou hintest that, were suit allowed thee,
La Vallière might not scorn it; — is it so?

LAUZUN.

I crave your pardon, Sire.

LOUIS.

Must I ask twice?

LAUZUN.

I do believe, then, Sire, with time and patience,
The Duchess might be won to — *not reject me?*

LOUIS.

Go, then, and prove thy fortune. We permit thee,
And, if thou prosperest, why then love's a riddle,
And woman is — no matter! Go, my Lord;
We did not mean to wound thee. So, forget it!
Woo when thou wilt — and wear what thou canst win.

LAUZUN.

My gracious Liege, Lauzun commends him to thee;
And if one word, he merit not, may wound him,
He'll think of favours words can never cancel.
Memory shall med'cine to his present pain.
God save you, Sire! — (*Aside*) to be the dupe I deem you!
[*Exit.*

LOUIS.

I love her not; and yet, methinks, am jealous!
Lauzun is wise and witty — knows the sex;
What if she do? — No! I will not believe it.
And what is she to me? — a friend — a friend!
And I would have her wed. 'Twere best for both —
A balm for conscience — an excuse for change!
'Twere best: — I marvel much if she'll accept him! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.

A private Apartment in the Palace of the Duchess de La Vallière.

Enter the Duchess de La Vallière.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He loves me, then, no longer! All the words
Earth knows shape but one thought — 'He loves no longer!' —
Where shall I turn? My mother — my poor mother!
Sleeps the long sleep! 'Tis better so! Her life
Ran to its lees. I will not mourn for her.
But it is hard to be alone on earth!
This love, for which I gave so much, is dead,
Save in my heart; and love, surviving love,
Changes its nature, and becomes despair!
Ah, me! — ah me! how hateful is this world!

Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.

GENTLEMAN.

The Duke de Lauzun!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

News, sweet news, of Louis!

Enter Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

Dare I disturb your thoughts?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My Lord, you're welcome!

Came you from court to-day?

LAUZUN.

I left the King

But just now, in the gardens.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE. (*eagerly.*)

Well!

LAUZUN.

He bore him
With his accustomed health!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Proceed.

LAUZUN.

Dear Lady,
I have no more to tell.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)Alas! *No message!*

LAUZUN.

We did converse, 'tis true, upon a subject
Most dear to one of us. Your Grace divines it?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*joyfully.*)Was it of *me* he spoke?

LAUZUN.

Of you
I spoke, and *he* replied. I praised your beauty —

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You praised!

LAUZUN.

Your form, your face — that wealth of mind
Which, play'd you not the miser, and concealed it,
Would buy up all the coins that pass for wit.
The King, assenting, wished he might behold you
As happy — as your virtues should have made you.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Twas said in mockery!

LAUZUN.

Lady, no! — in kindness.

Nay, more, (he added), would you yet your will
Mould to his wish —

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

His wish! — the lightest!

LAUZUN.

Ah!

You know not how my heart throbs while you speak!
Be not so rash to promise; or, at least,
Be faithful to perform!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You speak in riddles.

LAUZUN.

Of your lone state and beautiful affections,
Formed to make Home an Eden, our good King,
Tenderly mindful, fain would see you link
Your lot to one whose love might be your shelter.
He spake, and all my long-concealed emotions
Gush'd into words, and I confess'd — O Lady,
Hear me confess once more — how well I love thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

You dared? — and *he* — the King —

LAUZUN.

Upon me smiled,
And bade me prosper.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah!

(Sinks down, and covers her face with her hands.)

LAUZUN.

Nay, nay, look up!

The heart that could forsake a love like thine
Doth not deserve regret. Look up, dear Lady!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He bade thee prosper!

LAUZUN.

Pardon! My wild hope
Outran discretion.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Louis bade thee prosper!

LAUZUN.

Ah, if this thankless — this remorseless love
Thou couldst forget! Oh, give me but thy friendship,
And take respect, faith, worship, all, in Lauzun!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Consign me to another; Well, 'tis well!
Earth's latest tie is broke! — earth's hopes are over!

LAUZUN.

Speak to me, sweet Louise!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

So, thou art he
To whom this shattered heart should be surrendered? —
And thou, the high-born, glittering, scornful Lauzun,
Wouldst take the cast-off leman of a King,
Nor think thyself disgraced! — Fie! — fie! thou'rt shameless!

LAUZUN.

You were betray'd by love, and not by sin,
Nor low ambition. Your disgrace is honour
By the false side of dames the world calls spotless.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Go, sir, nor make me scorn you. If I've erred,
I know, at least, the majesty of virtue,
And feel — what you forget.

LAUZUN.

Yet hear me, Madam!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Go, go! You are the King's friend—you were mine;
I would not have you thus debased: refused
By one, at once the fallen and forsaken!
His friend shall not be shamed so! [*Exit.*

LAUZUN (*passing his hand over his eyes.*)

I do swear

These eyes are moist! And he who owned this gem
Casts it away, and cries 'divine' to tinsel!
So falls my hope. My fortunes call me back
To surer schemes. Before that ray of goodness
How many plots shrunk, blinded, into shadow!
Lauzun forgot himself, and dreamt of virtue! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Gentleman of the Chamber, and Bragelone, as a Franciscan friar.

GENTLEMAN.

The Duchess gone! I fear me that, to-day,
You are too late for audience, reverend father.

BRAGELONE.

Audience! — a royal phrase! — it suits the Duchess.
Go, son; announce me.

GENTLEMAN.

By what name, my father?

BRAGELONE.

I've done with names. Announce a nameless monk,
Whose prayers have risen o'er some graves she honours.

GENTLEMAN (*aside.*)

My lady is too lavish of her bounty
To these proud shavelings: yet, methinks, this friar

Hath less of priest than warrior in his bearing.
 He awes me with his stern and thrilling voice,
 His stately gesture, and imperious eye.
 And yet, I swear, he comes for alms! — the varlet!
 Why should I heed him?

BRAGELONE.

Didst thou hear? Begone!

[*Exit Gentleman.*]

Yes, she will know me not. My lealest soldier,
 One who had march'd, bare-breasted, on the steel,
 If I had bid him cast away the treasure
 Of the o'er-valued life; the nurse that reared me,
 Or mine own mother, in these shroudlike robes,
 And in the immature and rapid age
 Which, from my numb'd and withering heart, hath crept
 Unto my features. now might gaze upon me,
 And pass the stranger by. Why should she know me,
 If they who lov'd me know not? Hark! I hear her:
 That silver footfall! — still it hath to me
 Its own peculiar and most spiritual music,
 Trembling along the pulses of the air,
 And dying on the heart that makes its echo!
 'Tis she! How lovely yet!

Enter the Duchess de La Vallière.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Your blessing, father.

BRAGELONE.

Let courts and courtiers bless the favoured Duchess:
 Courts bless the proud; God's ministers, the humble.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

He taunts me, this poor friar! Well, my father,
 I have obeyed your summons. Do you seek

Masses for souls departed? —or the debt
The wealthy owe the poor? —say on!

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

Her heart
Is not yet hardened! Daughter, such a mission
Were sweeter than the task which urged me hither:
You had a lover once—a plain, bold soldier;
He loved you well!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah, Heaven!

BRAGELONE.

And you forsook him.
Your choice was natural—some might call it noble!
And this blunt soldier pardoned the *desertion*,
But sunk at what his folly termed *dishonour*.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O, Father, spare me! — if dishonour were,
It rested but with me.

BRAGELONE.

So deemed the world,
But not that foolish soldier! — he had learned
To blend his thoughts, his fame, *himself*, with thee;
Thou wert a purer, a diviner self;
He loved thee as a warrior worships glory;
He loved thee as a Roman honoured virtue;
He loved thee as thy sex adore ambition;
And when Pollution breathed upon his idol,
It blasted glory, virtue, and ambition,
Fill'd up each crevice in the world of thought,
And poisoned earth with thy contagious shame!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Spare me! in mercy, spare me!

BRAGELONE.

This poor fool,
 This shadow, living only on thy light,
 When thou wert darkened, could but choose to die.
 He left the wars; — no fame, since *thine* was dim:
 He left his land; — what home without Louise?
 It broke—that stubborn, stern, unbending heart—
 It broke! and, breaking, its last sigh—forgave thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And I live on!

BRAGELONE.

One eve, methinks, he told me,
 Thy hand around his hauberk wound a scarf;
 And thy voice bade him 'Wear it for the sake
 Of one who honoured worth!' Were those the words?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

They were. Alas! alas!

BRAGELONE.

He wore it, Lady,
 Till memory ceased. It was to him the token
 Of a sweet dream; and, from his quiet grave,
 He sends it now to thee. — Its hues are faded.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Give it me! — let me bathe it with my tears!
 Memorial of my guilt—

BRAGELONE (*in a soft and tender accent.*)

And *his* forgiveness!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

That tone! — ha! while thou speakest, in thy voice,
 And in thy presence, there is something kindred
 To him we jointly mourn: thou art—

BRAGELONE.

His brother;
Of whom, perchance, in ancient years he told thee;
Who, early wearied of this garish world,
Fled to the convent-shade, and found repose.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*approaching.*)

Ay, is it so? — thou'rt Bragelone's brother?
Why, then, thou art what *he* would be, if living —
A friend to one most friendless!

BRAGELONE.

Friendless! — Ay,
Thou hast learnt, betimes, the truth, that man's wild passion
Makes but its sport of virtue, peace, affection!
And breaks the plaything when the game is done!
Friendless! — I pity thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Oh! holy Father,
Stay with me! — succour me! — reprove, but guide me;
Teach me to wean my thoughts from earth to heaven,
And be what God ordained his chosen priests —
Foes to our sin, but friends to our despair.

BRAGELONE.

Daughter, a heavenly and a welcome duty,
But one most rigid and austere: there is
No composition with our debts of sin.
God claims thy soul; and, lo! his creature there!
Thy choice must be between them — God or man,
Virtue or guilt; a Louis or —

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

A Louis!

Not mine the poor atonement of the choice;
I am, myself, the Abandoned One!

BRAGELONE.

I know it;

Therefore my mission and my ministry.
 When he who loved thee died, he bade me wait
 The season when the sicklied blight of change
 Creeps o'er the bloom of Passion, when the way
 Is half prepared by Sorrow to Repentance,
 And seek you then, — *he* trusted not in vain:
 Perchance an idle hope, but it consoled him.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

No, no! — not idle! — in my happiest hours,
 When the world smiled, a void was in this heart
 The world could never fill: thy brother knew me!

BRAGELONE.

I do believe thee, daughter. Hear me yet;
 My mission is not ended. When thy mother
 Lay on the bed of death, (she went before
 The sterner heart the same blow broke more slowly,)
 As thus she lay, around the swimming walls
 Her dim eyes wandered, searching, through the shadows,
 As if the spirit, half-redeemed from clay,
 Could force its will to shape, and, from the darkness,
 Body a daughter's image — (nay, be still!)
 Thou wert not there; — alas! thy shame had murdered
 Even the blessed sadness of that duty!
 But o'er that pillow watched a sleepless eye,
 And by that couch moved one untiring step,
 And o'er that suffering rose a ceaseless prayer;
 And still thy mother's voice, whene'er it called
 Upon a daughter — found a son!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O God!

Have mercy on me!

BRAGELONE.

Coldly, through the lattice,
 Gleamed the slow dawn, and, from their latest sleep,
 Woke the sad eyes it was not *thine* to close!
 And, as they fell upon haggard brow,
 And the thin hairs — grown grey, but not by Time —
 Of that lone watcher — while upon her heart
 Gushed all the memories of the mighty wrecks
 Thy guilt had made of what were once the shrines
 For Honour, Peace, and God! — that aged woman
 (She was a hero's wife) upraised her voice
 To curse her child!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE

Go on! — be kind, and kill me!

BRAGELONE.

Then he, whom thoughts of what he *was* to *thee*
 Had made her son, arrested on her lips
 The awful doom, and, from the earlier past,
 Invoked a tenderer spell — a holier image;
 Painted thy gentle, soft, obedient childhood —
 Thy guileless youth, lone state, and strong temptation;
 Thy very sin the overflow of thoughts
 From wells whose source was innocence: and thus
 Sought, with the sunshine of thy maiden spring,
 To melt the ice that lay upon her heart,
 Till all the mother flowed again!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

And she? —

BRAGELONE.

Spoke only once again! She died — and *blest* thee!DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*rushing out.*)No more! — I *can* no more! — my heart is breaking!

BRAGELONE.

The angel hath not left her! — if the plumes
Have lost the whiteness of their younger glory,
The wings have still the instinct of the skies,
And yet shall bear her up!

LOUIS (*without.*)

We need you not, Sir;
Ourselves will seek the Duchess.

BRAGELONE.

The King's voice!
How my flesh creeps! — my foe, and her destroyer!
The ruthless, heartless —

(His hand seeks, rapidly and mechanically, for his swordhilt.)

Why, why! — where's my sword?
O Lord! I do forget myself to dotage:
The soldier, now, is a poor helpless monk,
That hath not even curses! Satan, hence!
Get thee behind me, Tempter! — There, I'm calm.

SCENE IV.

Louis—Bragelone.

LOUIS.

I can no more hold parley with impatience,
But long to learn how Lauzun's courtship prospers.
She is not here. At prayers, perhaps. The Duchess
Rath grown devout. A friar! — Save you, father!

BRAGELONE.

I thank thee, son.

LOUIS.

He knows me not. Well, Monk,
Are you her Grace's almoner?

BRAGELONE.

Sire, no!

LOUIS.

So short, yet know us?

BRAGELONE.

Sire, I do. You are

The man —

LOUIS.

How, priest! — the *man*!

BRAGELONE.

The word offends you?

The King, who raised a maiden to a Duchess.
That maiden's father was a gallant subject:
Kingly reward! — you made his daughter Duchess.
That maiden's mother was a stainless matron:
Her heart you broke, though mother to a Duchess!
That maiden was affianced from her youth
To one who served you well — nay, saved your life:
His life you robbed of all that gave life value;
And yet — you made his fair betrothed a Duchess!
You are that King. The world proclaims you 'Great';
A million warriors bled to buy your laurels;
A million peasants starved to build Versailles;
Your people famish; but your court is splendid!
Priests from their pulpits bless your glorious reign;
Poets have sung thee greater than Augustus;
And painters placed you on immortal canvass,
Limn'd as the Jove whose thunders awe the world:
But to the humble minister of God,
You are the King who has betrayed his trust —
Beggared a nation but to bloat a court,
Seen in men's lives the pastime to ambition,

Looked but on virtue as the toy for vice;
 And, for the first time, from a subject's lips,
 Now learns the name he leaves to Time and God!

LOUIS.

Add to the bead-rool of that King's offences
 That, when a foul-mouthed Monk assumed the rebel,
 The Monster-King forgave him. Hast thou done?

BRAGELONE.

Your changing hues belie your royal mien;
 Ill the high monarch veils the trembling man!

LOUIS.

Well, you are privileged! It ne'er was said
 The Fourteenth Louis, in his proudest hour,
 Bow'd not his sceptre to the Church's crozier.

BRAGELONE.

Alas! *the Church!* 'Tis true, this garb of serge
 Dares speech that daunts the ermine, and walks free
 Where stout hearts tremble in the triple mail.
 But wherefore? — Lies the virtue in the robe,
 Which the moth eats? or in these senseless beads?
 Or in the name of Priest? The Pharisees
 Had priests that gave their Saviour to the cross!
 No! we have high immunity and sanction,
 That Truth may teach humanity to Power,
 Glide through the dungeon, pierce the armed through,
 Awaken Luxury on her Sybarite couch,
 And, startling souls that slumber on a throne,
 Bow king before that priest of priests — THE CONSCIENCE!

LOUIS (*aside.*)

An awful man! — unlike the reverend crew
 Who praise my royal virtues in the pulpit,
 And — ask for bishoprics when church is over!

BRAGELONE.

This makes us sacred. The profane are they
Honouring the herald while they scorn the mission.
The king who serves the church, yet clings to mammon,
Who fears the pastor, but forgets the flock,
Who bows before the monitor, and yet
Will ne'er forego the sin, may sink, when age
Palsies the lust and deadens the temptation,
To the priest-ridden, not repentant, dotard, —
For pious hopes hail superstitious terrors,
And seek some sleek Iscariot of the *church*,
To sell salvation for the thirty pieces!

LOUIS (*aside.*)

He speaks as one inspired!

BRAGELONE.

Awake! — awake!

Great though thou art, awake thee from the dream
That earth was made for kings — mankind for slaughter —
Woman for lust — the People for the Palace!
Dark warnings have gone forth; along the air
Lingers the crash of the first Charles's throne!
Behold the young, the fair, the haughty king!
The kneeling courtiers, and the flattering priests;
Lo! where the palace rose, behold the scaffold —
The crowd — the axe — the headsman — and the Victim!
Lord of the silver lilies, canst thou tell
If the same fate await not thy descendant!
If some meek son of thine imperial line
May make no brother to yon headless spectre!
And when the sage who saddens o'er the end
Tracks back the causes, tremble, lest he find
The seeds, thy wars, thy pomp, and thy profusion

Sowed in a heartless court and breadless people,
 Grew to the tree from which men shaped the scaffold, —
 And the long glare of thy funereal glories
 Light unborn monarchs to a ghastly grave!
 Beware, proud King! the Present cries aloud,
 A prophet to the Future! Wake! — beware! [*Exit.*]

LOUIS.

Gone! Most ill-omened voice and fearful shape!
 Scarce seemed it of the earth; a thing that breathed
 But to fulfil some dark and dire behest,
 To appal us, and to vanish. — The quick blood
 Halts in my veins. Oh! never till this hour
 Heard I the voice that awed the soul of Louis,
 Or met one brow that did not quail before
 My kingly gaze! And this unmitred monk!
 I'm glad that none were by. — It was a dream,
 So let its memory like a dream depart.
 I am no tyrant — nay, I love my people.
 My wars were made but for the fame of France!
 My pomp! why, tush! — what king can play the hermit?
 My conscience smites me not; and but last eve
 I did confess, and was absolved! — A bigot;
 And half, methinks, a heretic! I wish
 The Jesuits had the probing of his doctrines.
 Well, well, 'tis o'er! — What ho, there!

Enter Gentleman of the Chamber.

LOUIS.

Wine! Apprise
 Once more the Duchess of our presence. — Stay!
 Yon monk, what doth he here?

GENTLEMAN.

I know not, Sire,
 Nor saw him till this day.

LOUIS.

Strange! — Wine!

[Exit Gentleman.]

SCENE V.

Duchess de La Vallière — Louis.

LOUIS.

Well, Madam,

We've tarried long your coming, and meanwhile
 Have found your proxy in a madman monk,
 Whom, for the future, we would pray you spare us.

(Re-enter Gentleman with wine.)

So, so! the draught restores us. Fair La Vallière,
 Make not yon holy man your confessor;
 You'll find small comfort in his lectures.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire,

His meaning is more kindly than his manner.
 I pray you, pardon him.

LOUIS.

Ay, ay! No more;
 Let's think of him no more. You had, this morn,
 A courtlier visitant, methinks — De Lauzun?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes, Sire.

LOUIS.

A smooth and gallant gentleman.
 You're silent. Silence is assent; — 'tis well!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

Down, my full heart! the Duke declares your wish

Is that — that I should bind this broken heart
And — no! I cannot speak —

(With great and sudden energy.)

You wish me wed, Sire?

LOUIS.

'Twere best that you should wed; and yet, De Lauzun
Is scarce the happiest choice. — But as thou wilt.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

'Twere best that I should wed! — thou saidst it, Louis;
Say it once more!

LOUIS.

In honesty, I think so.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

My choice is made, then — I obey the fiat,
And will become a bride!

LOUIS.

The Duke has sped!

I trust he loves thyself, and not thy dower.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

The Duke! what, hast thou read so ill this soul
That thou couldst deem thus meanly of that book
Whose every page was bared to thee? A bitter
Lot has been mine — and this sums up the measure.
Go, Louis! go! — All glorious as thou art —
Earth's Agamemnon — the great king of men —
Thou wert not worthy of this woman's heart!

LOUIS.

Her passion moves me! — Then your choice has fallen
Upon a nobler bridegroom?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Sire, it hath!

LOUIS.

May I demand that choice?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*aside.*)

Too soon thou'lt learn it.

Not yet! Ah me!

LOUIS.

Nay, sigh not, my sweet Duchess,
Speak not so sadly. What, though love hath past
Friendship remains; and still my fondest hope
Is to behold thee happy. Come!—thy hand;
Let us be friends! We are so!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Friends!—No more!

So it hath come to this! I am contented!

Yes — we are friends!

LOUIS.

And when your choice is made,
You will permit your friend to hail your bridals?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ay, when my choice is made!

LOUIS.

This poor De Lauzun
Hath then no chance? I'm glad of it, and thus
Seal our new bond of friendship on your hand.
Adieu! — and Heaven protect you! [*Exit.*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*gazing after him.*)

Heaven hath *heard* thee,
And in this last most cruel, but most gracious,
Proof of thy coldness, breaks the lingering chain
That bound my soul to earth.

(*Enter Bragelone.*)

O holy father !
 Brother to him whose grave my guilt prepared,
 Witness my firm resolve, support my struggles,
 And guide me back to Virtue through Repentance !

BRAGELONE.

Pause, ere thou dost decide.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I've paused too long,
 And now, impatient of this weary load,
 Sigh for repose.

BRAGELONE.

Oh, Heaven, receive her back !
 Through the wide earth, the sorrowing dove hath flown,
 And found no haven ; weary though her wing
 And sullied with the dust of lengthened travail,
 Now let her flee away and be at rest !
 The peace that man has broken — THOU restore
 Whose holiest name is FATHER !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hear us, Heaven !

ACT V.

SCENE I.

The Gardens at Versailles.

Enter Madame de Montespan, Grammont and Courtiers.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

So she has fled from court — the saintly Duchess ;
 A convent's grate must shield this timorous virtue.
 Methinks they're not so many to assail it !
 Well, trust me, one short moon of fast and penance
 Will bring us back the recreant novice —

GRAMMONT.

And

End the eventful comedy by marriage.

Lauzun against the world were even odds;

But Lauzun *with* the world — what saint can stand it?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

Lauzun! — the traitor! What! to give my rival

The triumph to reject the lawful love

Of him whose lawless passion first betrayed me!

GRAMMONT.

Talk of the devil! Humph — you know the proverb.

Enter Lauzun.

LAUZUN.

Good day, my friends. Your pardon, Madam; I

Thought 'twas the sun that blinded me. — (*Aside.*) Athenè!

Pray you, a word.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

(*Aloud, and turning away disdainfully.*)

We're not at leisure, Duke.

LAUZUN.

Ha! (*Aside.*) Nay, Athenè, spare your friend these graces.

Forget your state one moment; have you asked

The King the office that you undertook

To make my own? My creditors are urgent.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aloud.*)

No, my Lord Duke, I have not asked the King!

I grieve to hear your fortunes are so broken,

And that your honoured and august device,

To mend them by your marriage, failed.

GRAMMONT.

She hits him

Hard on the hip. Ha, ha! — the poor De Lauzun

LAUZUN.

Sir! — Nay, I'm calm!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Pray, may we dare to ask
How long you've loved the Duchess?

LAUZUN.

Ever since
You were her friend and confidante.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

You're bitter.
Perchance you deem your love a thing to boast of.

LAUZUN.

To boast of! — Yes! 'Tis something ev'n to love
The only woman Louis ever *honoured*!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*laying her hand on Lauzun's arm.*)

Insolent! You shall rue this! If I speak
Your name to Louis, coupled with a favour,
The suit shall be your banishment! [*Exit.*]

FIRST COURTIER.

Let's follow.

Ha! ha! — Dear Duke, your game, I fear, is lost!
You've played the knave, and thrown away the king.

COURTIERS.

Ha! ha! — Adieu!

[*Exeunt.*]

LAUZUN.

Ha! ha! — the devil take you!

SCENE II.

Enter to Lauzun the Marquis the Montespan.

MARQUIS DE MONTESPAN.

My wife's not here! that's well! We're not to speak;
But, when we meet, I bow — she smiles politely.
A hundred thousand crowns for being civil

To one another! Well now, that's a thing
That happens but to Marquises. It shews
My value in the state! The King esteems
My comfort of such consequence to France,
He pays me down a hundred thousand crowns
Rather than let my wife disturb my temper!
Lauzun! Aha! he seems as something crossed him.
I will console him. Duke, I'm ravish'd!

LAUZUN.

Damn you!

MONTESPAN.

Damn *me*! What! damn a Marquis! Heaven would think
Twice of it, Sir, before it damn'd a man
Of *my* rank! Damn a Marquis! there's religion! [*Exit.*

LAUZUN.

So, she would ruin me! Fore-armed — fore-warned!
I have the King's ear yet, and know some secrets
That could destroy her! Since La Vallière's flight,
Louis grows sad and thoughtful, and looks cold
On her vain rival, who too coarsely shews
The world the stuff court ladies' hearts are made of.
She will undo herself — and I will help her.
Weave on thy web, false Montespan, weave on;
The bigger spider shall devour the smaller.
The war's declared — 'tis clear that one must fall: —
I'll be polite — the *Lady* to the wall! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.

Sunset — the old Chateau of La Vallière — the Convent of the Carmelites at a distance — the same scene as that with which the play opens.

Enter the Duchess de La Vallière and Bragelone from the Chateau.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Once more, ere yet I take farewell of earth,
I see mine old, familiar, maiden home!
All how unchanged! — the same the hour, the scene,
The very season of the year! the stillness
Of the smooth wave — the stillness of the trees,
Where the winds sleep like dreams! — and, oh! the calm
Of the blue heavens around yon holy spires,
Pointing, like gospel truths, through calm and storm,
To man's great home!

BRAGELONE (*aside.*)

Oh! how the years recede!
Upon this spot I spoke to her of love,
And dreamt of bliss for earth! (*The vesper-bell tolls.*)

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Hark! the deep sound,
That seems a voice from some invisible spirit,
Claiming the world for God. — When last I heard it
Hallow this air, here stood my mother, living;
And I — was then a mother's *pride*! — and yonder
Came thy brave brother in his glittering mail;
And — ah! these thoughts are bitter! — were he living
How would he scorn them!

BRAGELONE (*who has been greatly agitated.*)

No! — ah, no! — thou wrong'st him!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yet, were he living, could I but receive

From his own lips my pardon, and his blessing,
My soul would deem one dark memorial rased
Out of the page most blistered with its tears!

BRAGELONE.

Then have thy wish! and in these wrecks of man
Worn to decay, and rent by many a storm,
Survey the worm the world called Bragelone.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Avaunt! — avaunt! — I dream! — the dead returned
To earth to mock me! — No! this hand is warm!
I have one murther less upon my soul,
I thank thee, Heaven! — (*swoons.*)

BRAGELONE (*supporting her.*)

The blow strikes home; and yet
What is my life to her! Louise! — She moves not;
She does not breathe; how still she sleeps! — I saw her
Sleep in her mother's arms, and then, in sleep
She smiled. *There's no smile now!* — poor child! One kiss!
It is a brother's kiss — it has no guilt;
Kind Heaven, it has no guilt. — I have survived
All earthlier thoughts: her crime, my vows, effaced them
A brother's kiss! — Away! I'm human still;
I thought I had been stronger; God forgive me!
Awake, Louise! — awake! She breathes once more;
The spell is broke; the marble warms to life!
And I freeze back to stone!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I heard a voice
That cried 'Louise!' — Speak, speak! — my sense is dim,
And struggles darkly with a blessed ray
That shot from heaven.—My shame hath not destroy'd thee!

BRAGELONE.

No! — life might yet serve *thee!* — and I lived on

Dead to all else. I took the vows, and then,
 Ere yet I laid me down, and bade the Past
 Fade like a ghost before the dawn of heaven,
 One sacred task was left. — If love was dust,
 Love, like ourselves, hath an immortal soul,
 That doth survive whate'er it takes from clay;
 And that — the holier part of love — became
 A thing to watch thy steps — a guardian spirit
 To hover round, disguised, unknown, undream'd of,
 To soothe the sorrow, to redeem the sin,
 And lead thy soul to peace!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

O bright revenge!

Love strong as death, and nobler far than woman's!

BRAGELONE.

To *peace* — ah, let me deem so! — the mute cloister,
 The spoken ritual, and the solemn veil,
 Are nought themselves; — the Huguenot adjures
 The monkish cell, but breathes, perchance, the prayer
 That speeds as quick to the Eternal Throne!
 In our own souls must be the solitude;
 In our own thoughts the sanctity! — 'Tis *then*
 The feeling that our vows have built the wall
 Passion can storm not, nor temptation sap,
 Gives calm its charter, roots out wild regret,
 And makes the heart the world-disdaining cloister.
This — this is peace! but pause, if in thy breast
 Linger the wish of earth. Alas! all oaths
 Are vain, if nature shudders to record them —
 The subtle spirit 'scapes the sealed vessel!
 The false devotion is the true despair!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Fear not! — I feel 'tis not the walls of stone,

Told beads, nor murmured hymns, that bind the heart,
Or exorcise the world; the spell's the thought
That where most weak we've banished the temptation,
And reconciled, what earth would still divide,
The human memories and the immortal conscience.

BRAGELONE.

Doubt fades before thine accents. On the day
That gives thee to the veil we'll meet once more.
Let mine be man's last blessing in this world.
Oh! tell me, then, thou'rt happier than thou hast been;
And when we part, I'll seek some hermit cell
Beside the walls that compass thee, and prayer,
Morning and night, shall join our souls in heaven.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes, generous spirit! think not that my future
Shall be repining as the past. Thou livest,
And conscience smiles again. The shattered bark
Glides to its haven. Joy! the land is near.

[Exit Duchess de La Vallière into the Chateau.]

BRAGELONE.

So, it is past! — the secret is disclosed!
The hand she did reject on earth has led her
To holier ties. I have not lived in vain!
Yet who had dreamed, when through the ranks of war
Went the loud shout of "France and Bragelone!"
That the monk's cowl would close on all my laurels?
A never-heard philosopher is Life! —
Our happiest hours are sleep's! — and sleep proclaims,
Did we but listen to its warning voice,
That REST is earth's elixir. Why, then, pine
That, ere our years grow feverish with their toil,
Too weary-worn to find the rest they sigh for,
We learn betimes THE MORAL OF REPOSE?

I will lie down, and sleep away this world.
 The pause of care, the slumber of tired passion,
 Why, why defer till night is well nigh spent?
 When the brief sun that gilt the landscape sets,
 When o'er the music on the leaves of life
 Chill silence falls, and every fluttering hope
 That voiced the world with song has gone to roost,
 Then let thy soul, from the poor labourer, learn
 'Sleep's sweetest taken soonest!'
*(As he moves away, his eye falls upon a glove dropped
 by the Duchess de La Vallière — he takes it up.)*
 And this hath touched her hand! — it were a comfort
 To hoard a single relic!

(Kisses the glove, and then suddenly dropping it.)

No! — 'tis sinful! *[Exit.]*

SCENE IV.

*The exterior of the Gothic Convent of the Carmelites —
 The windows illumined — Music heard from within
 — A crowd without — Enter Courtiers, Ladies,
 Priests, etc. and pass through the door of the
 Chapel, in the centre of the building.*

*Enter Lauzun from a door in the side wing of the
 Convent — To him, Grammont.*

LAUZUN.

Where hast thou left the king?

GRAMMONT.

Not one league hence.

LAUZUN.

Ere the clock strikes, La Vallière takes the veil.

GRAMMONT.

Great Heaven! so soon! — and Louis sent me on,
 To learn how thou hadst prospered with the Duchess.

He is so sanguine — this imperious King,
Who never heard a “No” from living lips!
How did she take his letter?

LAUZUN.

In sad silence;
Then mused a little while, and some few tears
Stole down her cheeks, as, with a trembling hand,
She gave me back the scroll.

GRAMMONT.

You mean her answer.

LAUZUN.

No; the King's letter. “Tell him that I thank him;”
(Such were her words;) “but that my choice is made;
And ev'n this last assurance of his love
I dare not keep: 'tis only when I pray,
That I may think of him. This is my answer.”

GRAMMONT.

No more? — no written word?

LAUZUN.

None, Grammont. Then
She rose and left me; and I heard the bell
Calling the world to see a woman scorn it.

GRAMMONT.

The King will never brook it. He will grasp her
Back from this yawning tomb of living souls.
The news came on him with such sudden shock;
The long noviciate thus abridged; and she —
Ever so waxen to his wayward will! —
She cannot yet be marble.

LAUZUN.

Wronged affection
Makes many a Niobe from tears. Haste, Grammont,
Back to the King, and bid him fly to save,

Or nerve his heart to lose, her. I will follow, —
My *second* charge fulfilled.

GRAMMONT.

And what is that?

LAUZUN.

Revenge and justice! — Go! [Exit Grammont.]

LAUZUN (*looking down the stage.*)

I hear her laugh —

I catch the glitter of her festive robe!

Athenè comes to triumph — and to tremble!

SCENE V.

Madame de Montespan, Courtiers, and Lauzun.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN (*aside.*)

Now for the crowning cup of sparkling fortune!

A rarer pearl than Egypt's queen dissolved

I have immersed in that delicious draught,

A woman's triumph o'er a fairer rival!

(*As she turns to enter the convent, she perceives Lauzun.*)

What! you here, Duke?

LAUZUN.

Ay, Madam; I've not yet

To thank you for — my banishment!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Thy Ides

Of March are come—not over!

LAUZUN.

Are they not?

For some they may be! You are here to witness—

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

My triumph!

LAUZUN.

And to take a *friend's* condolence.
I bear this letter from the King!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

The King!

(*Reads the letter.*)

"We do not blame you; blame belongs to love,
And love had nought with you."—What, what! I tremble!
"The Duke de Lauzun, of these lines the bearer,
Confirms their purport: from our royal court
We do excuse your presence." Banished, Duke?
Is that the word? — What, banished!

LAUZUN.

Hush!—you mar

The holy silence of the place. 'Tis true;
You read aright. Our gracious King permits you
To quit Versailles. Versailles is not the world.

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Perdition! — banished!

LAUZUN.

You can take the veil.
Meanwhile, enjoy *your triumph*!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Triumph! — Ah!

She triumphs o'er me to the last. My soul
Finds hell on earth—and hers makes earth a heaven!

LAUZUN.

Hist! — will you walk within?

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

O, hateful world!

What!—hath it come to this?

LAUZUN.

You spoil your triumph!

MADAME DE MONTESPAN.

Lauzun, I thank thee!—thank thee—thank—and curse thee!

*Exit.*LAUZUN. (*looking after her with a subdued laugh.*)

Ha, ha!—the *broken* heart can know no pang
 Like that which racks the *bad* heart when its sting
 Poisons itself. Now, then, away to Louis.
 The bell still tolls: there's time. This soft La Vallière!
 The only thing that ever baffled Lauzun,
 And felt not his revenge!—revenge, poor soul!
 Revenge upon a dove!—she shall be saved
 From the pale mummies of yon Memphian vault,
 Or the great Louis will be less than man,—
 Or that fond sinner will be more than woman. [*Exit.*

SCENE VI.

The interior of the Chapel of the Carmelite Convent—On the foreground, Courtiers, Ladies, &c.—At the back of the stage, the altar, only partially seen through the surrounding throng—The Officials pass to and fro, swinging the censers—The stage darkened—Lights suspended along the aisle, and tapers by the altar.

(As the Scene opens, solemn music, to which is chaunted the following—)

HYMN.

Come from the world, O weary soul,
 For run the race and near the goal!
 Flee from the net, O lonely dove,
 Thy nest is built the clouds above!
 Turn, wild and worn with panting fear,

And slake thy thirst, thou wounded deer,
 In Jordan's holy springs!
 Arise! O fearful soul, arise!
 For broke the chain and calm the skies!
 As moths fly upward to the star,
 The light allures thee from afar.
 Though earth is lost, and space is wide,
 The smile of God shall be thy guide,
 And Faith and Hope thy wings!

*(As the Hymn ends, Bragelone enters, and stands apart
 in the background.)*

FIRST COURTIER.

Three minutes more, and earth has lost La Vallière!

SECOND COURTIER.

So young!—so fair!

THIRD COURTIER.

'Twas whispered, that the King
 Would save her yet!

FIRST COURTIER.

What snatch her from the altar?

He durst not, man!

Enter Louis, Grammont, and Lauzun.

LOUIS.

Hold! we forbid the rites!

*(As the King advances hastily up the aisle, Bragelone
 places himself before him.)*

Back, monk! revere the presence of the King!

BRAGELONE.

And thou the palace of the King of kings!

LOUIS.

Dotard! we claim our subject.

BRAGELONE.

She hath past
The limit of your realm. Ye priests of God,
Complete your solemn task!—The church's curse
Hangs on the air. Descendant of Saint Louis,
Move—and the avalanche falls!

*(The Duchess de La Vallière, still drest in the bridal
and gorgeous attire assumed before the taking of
the veil, descends from the altar.)*

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

No, holy friend!

I need it not; my soul is my protector.
Nay, thou mayst trust me.

BRAGELONE *(after a pause.)*

Thou art right,—I trust thee!

LOUIS *(Leading the Duchess to the front of the stage.)*
Thou hast not ta'en the veil?—Ev'n Time had mercy.
Thou art saved!—thou art saved!—to love—to life!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Ah, Sire!

LOUIS.

Call me not Sire!—forget that dreary time
When thou wert Duchess, and myself the King.
Fly back, fly back, to those delicious hours
When *I* was but thy lover and thy Louis!
And thou my dream—my bird—my fairy flower—
My violet, shrinking in the modest shade
Until transplanted to this breast — to haunt
The common air with odours! Oh, Louise!
Hear me!—the fickle lust of change allured me,
The pride thy virtues wounded armed against thee,
Until I dreamed I loved thyself no longer;

But now this dread resolve, this awe of parting,
Re-binds me to thee—bares my soul before me—
Dispels the lying mists that veiled thine image,
And tells me that I never loved but thee!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I am not then despised!—thou lov'st me still!
And when I pray for thee, my heart may feel
That it hath nothing to forgive!

LOUIS.

Louise!

Thou dost renounce this gloomy purpose?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Never?

It is not gloomy!—think'st thou it is gloom
To feel that, as my soul becomes more pure,
Heaven will more kindly listen to the prayers
That rise for *thee*?—is that thought *gloom*, my Louis?

LOUIS.

Oh! slay me not with tenderness! Return!
And if thy conscience startle at my love,
Be still my friend—my angel!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I am weak,

But in the knowledge of my weakness, strong!
I could not breathe the air that's sweet with thee,
Nor cease to love!—in flight my only safety;
And were that flight not made by solemn vows
Eternal, it were bootless; for the wings
Of my wild soul know but two bournes to speed to—
Louis and Heaven! And, oh! in Heaven at last
My soul, unsinuing, may unite with Louis!

LOUIS.

I do implore thee!—

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

No; thou canst not tempt me!
My *heart* already is the nun.

LOUIS.

Thou know'st not
I have dismissed thy rival from the court.
Return! — though mine no more, at least thy Louis
Shall know no second love!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

What! wilt thou, Louis,
Renounce for me eternally my rival,
And live alone for——

LOUIS.

Thee! Louise, I swear it!

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE (*raising her arms to Heaven.*)
Father! at length, I dare to hope for pardon,
For now remorse may prove itself sincere!
Bear witness, Heaven! I never loved this man
So well as now! and never seemed *his* love
Built on so sure a rock! Upon thine altar
I lay the offering. I revoke the past;
For Louis, Heaven was left—and now I leave
Louis, when tenfold more beloved, for Heaven!
Ah! pray with me! Be this our latest token—
This memory of sweet moments—sweet, though sinless!
Ah! pray with me! that I may live till death
The thought — ‘we prayed together for forgiveness!’

LOUIS.

Oh! wherefore never knew I till this hour
The treasure I shall lose! I dare not call thee

Back from the Heaven where thou art half already !
Thy soul demands celestial destinies.
And stoops no more to earth. Be thine the peace,
And mine the penance ! Yet these awful walls,
The rigid laws of this severest order,
Yon spectral shapes, this human sepulchre,—
And thou, the soft, the delicate, the highborn,
The adored delight of Europe's mightiest king,—
Thou canst not bear it !

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

I have borne much worse—
Thy change and thy desertion ! — Let it pass !
There is no terror in the things without ;
Our souls alone the palace or the prison ;
And the one thought, that I have fled from sin
Will fill the cell with images more glorious,
And haunt its silence with a mightier music,
Than ever thronged illumined halls, or broke
From harps by mortal strung !

LOUIS.

I will not hear thee !
I cannot brave these thoughts. Thy angel voice
But tells me what a sun of heavenly beauty
Glides from the earth, and leaves my soul to darkness.
This is *my* work !—'twas I for whom that soul
Forsook its native element ; for me,
Sorrow consumed thy youth, and conscience gnawed
That patient, tender, unreproachful heart.
And now this crowns the whole ! the priest—the altar—
The sacrifice—the victim ! Touch me not !
Speak not ! I am unmann'd enough already.

I—I—I choke! These tears—let them speak for me.
Now! now thy hand—O, God! farewell, for ever! [Exit.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

For ever! till the angel's trump shall wake
 Affection from the grave. Ah! blessed thought.
 For ever! that's no word for earth; but angels
 Shall cry 'for ever' when we meet again:
 Be firm, my heart, be firm!

(After a pause, turning to Bragelone, with a slight smile.)

'Tis past! we've conquered!

*(The Duchess de La Vallière re-ascends to the altar —
 the crowd close around.)*

Music.

CHORUS. Hark! to the nuptial train are opened wide
 The Eternal Gates. Hosanna to the bride!

GRAMMONT.

She has ta'en the veil—the last dread rite is done.

ABBESS *(from the altar.)*

Sister Louise! before the eternal grate
 Becomes thy barrier from the living world,
 It is allowed thee once more to behold
 The face of men, and bid farewell to friendship.

BRAGELONE *(aside.)*

Why do I shudder? why shrinks back my being
 From our last gaze, like Nature from the Grave?
 One moment, and one look, and o'er her image
 Thick darkness falls, till Death, that morning star,
 Heralds immortal day. I hear her steps
 Treading the mournful silence; o'er my soul
 Pauses the freezing time. O Lord, support me!

One effort more — one effort! — Wake, my soul!
'Tis thy last trial; wilt thou play the craven?

(The crowd give way, the Duchess de La Vallière, in the habit of the Carmelite nuns, passes down the steps of the altar, led by the Abbess — As she pauses to address those whom she recognises in the crowd, the chorus chaunts) —

Sister, look and speak thy last,
From the world thou'rt dying fast;
While farewell to life thou'rt giving,
Dead already to the living.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE *(coming to the front of the stage, sees Lauzun.)*

Lauzun! thou serv'st a King, whate'er his faults,
Who merits all thy homage: honour — love him.
His glory needs no friendship; but in sickness,
Or sorrow, *kings* need love. — Be faithful, Lauzun!
And, far from thy loud world, one lowly voice
Shall not forget thee.

BRAGELONE *(aside.)*

All the strife is hushed!
My heart's wild sea lies mute, and o'er the waves
The Saviour walks.

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE *(approaching Bragelone, and kneeling to him.)*

And now, oh! friend and father,
Bless the poor Nun!

BRAGELONE.

As Duchess of La Vallière
Thou wert not happy; as the Carmelite Sister,
Say — *art* thou happy?

DUCHESS DE LA VALLIÈRE.

Yes!

BRAGELONE (*laying his hand on her head.*)

O Father, bless her!

CHORUS. Hark! in heaven is mirth!

Jubilate!

Grief leaves guilt on earth!

Jubilate!

Joy for sin forgiven!

Jubilate!

Come, O Bride of Heaven!

Jubilate

Curtain falls slowly.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE LADY OF LYONS,

OR

LOVE AND PRIDE;

A PLAY

IN FIVE ACTS.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

BEAUSEANT (a rich gentleman of Lyons, in love with, and refused by, Pauline Deschappelles).

GLAVIS (his friend, also a rejected suitor to Pauline).

Colonel, afterwards general, DAMAS (cousin to Madame Deschappelles, and an Officer in the French army).

Monsieur DESCHAPPELLES (a Lyonnese merchant, father to Pauline).

Landlord of the GOLDEN LION.

GASPAR.

CLAUDE MELNOTTE.

First Officer.

Second Officer.

Third Officer.

Servants, Notary, &c.

Madame DESCHAPPELLES.

PAULINE (her daughter).

The widow MELNOTTE (mother to Claude).

JANET (the inn-keeper's daughter).

MARIAN (maid to Pauline).

Scene — Lyons and the neighbourhood.

Time, 1795 — 1798.

P R E F A C E.

AN indistinct recollection of the very pretty little tale, — called “Perouse, or the Bellows-Mender, suggested the plot of this Drama. The incidents are, however, greatly altered from those in Perouse, and the characters entirely re-cast. In the selection of the time in which the Play has been laid, I was guided, naturally and solely, by the wish to take that period in which the incidents might be rendered most probable, and in which the probationary career of the hero, in the Fifth Act, — upon which the *dénouement*, and, indeed, the *design*, depends, — might be sufficiently rapid for dramatic effect, and (on account of that very rapidity) in accordance with the ordinary character and events of the age. The early years of the first and most brilliant successes of the French Republic appeared to constitute the only epoch in which these objects could be attained. It was a period when, in the general ferment of society, and the brief equalization of ranks, Claude’s high-placed love, his ardent feelings, his unsettled principles, — the struggle between which makes the passion of this drama, — his ambition, and his

career, were phenomena that characterised the time itself, and in which the spirit of the nation went along with the extravagance of the individual. In some respects, Claude Melnotte is a type of that restless, brilliant, and evanescent generation that sprung up from the ashes of the terrible revolution, — men, born to be agents of the genius of Napoleon, to accomplish the most marvellous exploits, and to leave but little of permanent triumph and solid advantage to the succeeding race.

In selecting this period as one best suited to the development of a story which seemed to me rich in materials of dramatic interest, I can honestly say that I endeavoured, as much as possible, to avoid every political allusion applicable to our own time and land, — our own party prejudices and passions. How difficult a task this was, a reference to any Drama, in which the characters are supposed to live under Republican institutions, will prove! There is scarcely a single play, the scene of which is laid in Rome, in Greece, in Switzerland, wherein political allusions and political declamations are not carefully elaborated as the most striking and telling parts of the performance. *

The principal fault of this Play, as characteristic of the time, is, perhaps, indeed, the too cautious avoidance of all those references to Liberty and Equality in which, no doubt, every man living at that day would have hourly indulged. The old and classical sentiment, that virtue is nobility (*virtus est sola nobilitas*), contains the pith of all the political creed announced by Claude Melnotte; and that sentiment is the founder, and often the motto, of Aristocracy itself. It is a sentiment that never will, I trust, be considered revolutionary in a

* The noble tragedy of "Ion" has for its very plot, its very catastrophe, almost its very moral, the abolition of Royalty and the establishment of a Republic; — yet no one would suspect Serjeant Talfourd of designing the overthrow of the British Constitution.

country which boasts, among its proudest names, the Wellesleys and the Russells — the Stanleys and the Howards. — It is one which the scribblers, sprung from a dunghill, may be assured that there are few men of blood and birth who will disavow. In fact, the enthusiasm of Claude is far more that of a soldier than a citizen; * and it is not the reasoner nor the politician, — but the man, with his feelings and his struggles, — with whom the audience sympathise, when he glories in the redemption of his name. It is perfectly clear that neither the English author nor the English audience can recognise much in harmony with their own sentiments, when Claude declares that the gold he has won in the campaign in Italy “*is hallowed in the cause of nations!*” The question for us to consider is, not whether an Englishman or a philosopher would think that there was any sanctity in the principles of that brilliant war, but whether an enthusiastic soldier under Napoleon would not have believed it. Our national prepossessions and prejudices, — our closeness to an age, the false glitter of which we can so well detect — alike, I hope, guard us against all political infection from a play cast in a time when the coming shadow of a military despotism was already darkening the prospects of an unwise and weak Republic: and if there be anywhere the antipodes to the French Jacobin of the last century, it is the English Reformer of the present. For my own part, I never met with any one, however warm a lover of abstract liberty, who had a sympathy with the principles

* The allusion to the rapidity of promotion in the French army was absolutely necessary to the conduct of the story; and, after all, it is expressed in language borrowed and adapted from that very jacobinical authority, Horatio Viscount Nelson. Nor is it easy to conceive how the sentiment — that merit, not money, should purchase promotion in the Army — can be called a *Republican* doctrine; since, though it certainly did pervade the French Republican Army, it inculcates a principle far more common in Despotic Countries than under Free Institutions. We must look to the annals of the East for the most frequent examples of the rise of fortunate soldiers.

of the Directory and the Government of M. Barras. But enough in contradiction of a charge which the whole English public have ridiculed and scouted, and which has sought to introduce into the free domain of art, all the miserable calumnies and wretched spleen of party hostilities.

The faults of the Play itself I do not seek to defend: such faults are the fair and just materials for criticism and cavil. I am perfectly aware that it is a very slight and trivial performance, and, being written solely for the Stage, may possess but a feeble interest in the closet. It was composed with a twofold object. In the first place, sympathising with the enterprise of Mr. Macready, as Manager of Covent Garden, and believing that many of the higher interests of the Drama were involved in the success or failure of an enterprise equally hazardous and disinterested, I felt, if I may so presume to express myself, something of the Brotherhood of Art; and it was only for Mr. Macready to think it possible that I might serve him, to induce me to make the attempt.

Secondly, in that attempt I was mainly anxious to see whether or not certain critics had truly declared that it was not in my power to attain the art of dramatic construction and theatrical effect. I felt, indeed, that it was in this that a writer, accustomed to the narrative class of composition, would have the most both to learn and to *unlearn*. Accordingly, it was to the development of the plot and the arrangement of the incidents that I directed my chief attention; — and I sought to throw whatever belongs to poetry less into the diction and the ‘felicity of words’ than into the construction of the story, the creation of the characters, and the spirit of the pervading sentiment. With this acknowledgment, may I hazard a doubt whether any more ornate or more elevated style of language would be so appropriate to the rank of characters introduced, or would leave so

clear and uninterrupted an effect to the strength and progress of that domestic interest, which (since I do not arrogate the entire credit of its invention) I may, perhaps, be allowed to call the chief attraction of the Play.

Having, on presenting this drama to the Theatre, confided the secret of its authorship to the Manager alone, — having, therefore induced no party, — no single friend or favourer of my own, — to attend the early performances which decided its success, — I hope that on my side “The Lady of Lyons” has been fairly left to the verdict of the Public, — let me now also hope an equal fairness from those who wish to condemn the Politician in the Author. I have no intention of writing again for the Stage; and, therefore, so far as my own experiment is concerned, I have but little to hope or fear. Do not let those who love the literature of the Drama discourage other men, immeasurably more fitted to adorn it, solely because in a free country they may, like the Author of this Play, have ventured elsewhere to express political opinions.

I cannot conclude without expressing my high sense of the care with which the “Lady of Lyons” was introduced on the Stage, — of its obligations to Mr. Macready, not less as a Manager who neglected no detail that could conduce to the effect of the representation, than as an Actor who realised and exalted every design of the Author. The power and pathos which Miss Faucit’s acting infused into language that will seem comparatively tame and cold to the reader, — the easy skill with which Mr. Bartley threw his own racy and vigorous humour into the character of Colonel Damas, — the zeal and ability which, in Mr. Elton’s Beauseant, relieved and elevated a part necessarily unpleasing to an actor of his station; and the performances, so accurate and spirited, of the characters less prominent in the develop-

ment of the story, especially of Mrs. Clifford and Mr. Meadows, — have already received a far higher reward than the acknowledgment of the Author, in the cordial applauses of the Audience.

E. L. B.

London, February 26, 1838.

THE LADY OF LYONS,

OR

LOVE AND PRIDE.

ACT I.

SCENE I.

A room in the house of M. Deschappelles, at Lyons. Pauline reclining on a sofa; Marian, her Maid, fanning her. — Flowers and notes on a table beside the sofa. — Madame Deschappelles seated. — The Gardens are seen from the open window.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Marian, put that rose a little more to the left. —
(*Marian alters the position of a rose in Pauline's hair.*)
Ah, so! — that improves the air, — the *tournure*, — the *je ne sais quoi*! — You are certainly very handsome, child! — quite my style! — I don't wonder that you make such a sensation! — Old, young, rich, and poor, do homage to the Beauty of Lyons! — Ah, we live again in our children, especially when they have our eyes and complexion!

PAULINE (*languidly.*)

Dear mother, you spoil your Pauline! — — (*aside*)
I wish I knew who sent me these flowers!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

No, child! — if I praise you, it is only to inspire you with a proper ambition. — You are born to make a great marriage. — Beauty is valuable or worthless according as you invest the property to the best advantage. — Marian, go and order the carriage! [*Exit Marian.*]

PAULINE.

Who *can* it be that sends me, every day, these beautiful flowers? — how sweet they are!

(*Enter Servant.*)

SERVANT.

Monsieur Beauseant, madame.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Let him enter, Pauline, this is another offer! — I know it is! — Your father should engage an additional clerk to keep the account-book of your conquests.

(*Enter Beauseant.*)

BEAUSEANT.

Ah, ladies, how fortunate I am to find you at home! — — (*aside*) How lovely she looks! — It is a great sacrifice I make in marrying into a family in trade! — they will be eternally grateful! — — (*aloud*) Madame, you will permit me a word with your charming daughter. — — (*Approaches Pauline, who rises disdainfully*) — — Mademoiselle, I have ventured to wait upon you, in a hope that you must long since have divined. Last night, when you outshone all the beauty of Lyons, you completed your conquest over me! You know that my fortune is not exceeded by any estate in the Province, — you know that, but for the Revolution, which has defrauded me of my titles, I should be noble.

May I, then, trust that you will not reject my alliance? I offer you my hand and heart.

PAULINE (*aside.*)

He has the air of a man who confers a favour! — (*aloud*) Sir, you are very condescending — I thank you humbly; but, being duly sensible of my own demerits, you must allow me to decline the honour you propose.

(*Curtsies, and turns away.*)

BEAUSEANT.

Decline! impossible! — you are not serious! — Madame, suffer me to appeal to *you*. I am a suitor for your daughter's hand — the settlements shall be worthy her beauty and my station. May I wait on M. Deschappelles?

MADAME DESCHAPP.

M. Deschappelles never interferes in the domestic arrangements, — you are very obliging. If you were still a Marquis, or if my daughter were intended to marry a commoner, — why, perhaps, we might give you the preference.

BEAUSEANT.

A commoner! — we are all commoners in France now.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

In France, yes; but there is a nobility still left in the other countries in Europe. We are quite aware of your good qualities, and don't doubt that you will find some lady more suitable to your pretensions. We shall be always happy to see you as an acquaintance, M. Beauseant! — My dear child, the carriage will be here presently.

BEAUSEANT.

Say no more, Madame! — say no more! — (*aside*) Refused! and by a merchant's daughter! — refused! It

will be all over Lyons before sunset! — I will go and bury myself in my chateau, study philosophy, and turn woman-hater. Refused! they ought to be sent to a mad-house! — Ladies, I have the honour to wish you a very good morning. [*Exit Beauseant.*]

MADAME DESCHAPP.

How forward these men are! — I think, child, we kept up our dignity. Any girl, however inexperienced, knows how to accept an offer, but it requires a vast deal of address to refuse one with proper condescension and disdain. I used to practise it at school with the dancing-master!

(*Enter Damas.*)

DAMAS.

Good morning, cousin Deschappelles. — Well, Pauline, are you recovered from last night's ball? — So many triumphs must be very fatiguing. Even M. Glavis sighed most piteously when you departed; but that might be the effect of the supper.

PAULINE.

M. Glavis, indeed!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

M. Glavis! — as if my daughter would think of M. Glavis!

DAMAS.

Hey-day! — why not? — His father left him a very pretty fortune, and his birth is higher than yours, cousin Deschappelles. But perhaps you are looking to M. Beauseant, — his father was a Marquis before the Revolution.

PAULINE.

M. Beauseant! — Cousin, you delight in tormenting me!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Don't mind him, Pauline! — Cousin Damas, you have no susceptibility of feeling, — there is a certain indelicacy in all your ideas. — M. Beauseant knows already that he is no match for my daughter!

DAMAS.

Pooh! pooh! one would think you intended your daughter to marry a prince!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Well, and if I did? — what then? — many a foreign prince —

DAMAS (*interrupting her.*)

Foreign prince! — foreign fiddlestick! — you ought to be ashamed of such nonsense at your time of life.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

My time of life! — That is an expression never applied to any lady till she is sixty-nine and three-quarters; — and only then by the clergyman of the parish.

(*Enter Servant.*)

SERVANT.

Madame, the carriage is at the door. [*Exit Servant.*]

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Come, child, put on your bonnet — you really have a very thorough-bred air — not at all like your poor father. — (*fondly*) Ah, you little coquette! when a young lady is always making mischief, it is a sure sign that she takes after her mother!

PAULINE.

Good day, cousin Damas — and a better humour to you — (*going back to the table and taking the flowers*). Who could have sent me these flowers?

[*Exeunt Pauline and Madame Deschappelles.*]

DAMAS.

That would be an excellent girl if her head had not been turned. I fear she is now become incorrigible! Zounds, what a lucky fellow I am to be still a bachelor! They may talk of the devotion of the sex — but the most faithful attachment in life is that of a woman in love — with herself! [Exit.]

SCENE II.

The exterior of a small Village Inn — sign the Golden Lion — a few leagues from Lyons, which is seen at a distance.

BEAUSEANT (*behind the scenes.*)

Yes, you may bait the horses, we shall rest here an hour.

(*Enter Beausant and Glavis.*)

GLAVIS.

Really, my dear Beauseant, consider that I have promised to spend a day or two with you at your chateau — that I am quite at your mercy for my entertainment — and yet you are as silent and as gloomy as a mute at a funeral, or an Englishman at a party of pleasure.

BEAUSEANT.

Bear with me! — the fact is that I am miserable.

GLAVIS.

You — the richest and gayest bachelor in Lyons?

BEAUSEANT.

It is because I am a bachelor that I am miserable. — Thou knowest Pauline — the only daughter of the rich merchant, Mons. Deschappelles?

GLAVIS.

Know her! — who does not? — as pretty as Venus, and as proud as Juno.

BEAUSEANT.

Her taste is worse than her pride — (*drawing himself up.*) Know, Glavis, she has actually refused *me*!

GLAVIS (*aside.*)

So she has me! — very consoling! In all cases of heart-ache, the application of another man's disappointment draws out the pain, and allays the irritation. — (*Aloud.*) Refused you! and wherefore?

BEAUSEANT.

I know not, unless it be because the Revolution swept away my father's title of Marquis — and she will not marry a commoner. Now, as we have no noblemen left in France, as we are all citizens and equals, she can only hope that, in spite of the war, some English Milord or German Count will risk his life, by coming to Lyons and making her my Lady. Refused me, and with scorn! — By heaven, I'll not submit to it tamely — I'm in a perfect fever of mortification and rage. — Refuse me, indeed!

GLAVIS.

Be comforted, my dear fellow — I will tell you a secret. For the same reason she refused *ME*!

BEAUSEANT.

You! — that's a very different matter! But give me your hand, Glavis — we'll think of some plan to humble her. By Jove, I should like to see her married to a strolling player!

(*Enter Landlord and his Daughter, from the Inn.*)

LANDLORD.

Your servant, citizen Beauseant — servant, Sir. Perhaps you will take dinner before you proceed to your chateau; our larder is most plentifully supplied.

BEAUSEANT.

I have no appetite.

GLAVIS.

Nor I. Still it is bad travelling on an empty stomach. What have you got?

(Takes and looks over the bill of fare.)

(Shout without) — “Long live the Prince! — Long live the Prince!”

BEAUSEANT.

The Prince! — what Prince is that? I thought we had no princes left in France.

LANDLORD.

Ha, ha! the lads always call him Prince. He has just won the prize in the shooting-match, and they are taking him home in triumph.

BEAUSEANT.

Him! and who's M. Him?

LANDLORD.

Who should he be, but the pride of the village, Claude Melnotte? — Of course you have heard of Claude Melnotte?

GLAVIS *(giving back the bill of fare.)*

Never had that honour. Soup — ragout of hare — roast chicken, and, in short, all you have!

BEAUSEANT.

The son of old Melnotte, the gardener?

LANDLORD.

Exactly so — a wonderful young man.

BEAUSEANT.

How wonderful! — are his cabbages better than other people's?

LANDLORD.

Nay, he don't garden any more; his father left him well off, He's only a genus.

GLAVIS.

A what?

LANDLORD.

A genus! — a man who can do everything in life, except anything that's useful; — that's a genus.

BEAUSEANT.

You raise my curiosity — proceed.

LANDLORD.

Well, then, about four years ago, old Melnotte died and left his son well to do in the world. We then all observed that a great change came over young Claude: he took to reading and Latin, and hired a professor from Lyons, who had so much in his head that he was forced to wear a great full-bottom wig to cover it. Then he took a fencing-master, and a dancing-master, and a music-master; and then he learned to paint; and at last it was said that young Claude was to go to Paris, and set up for a painter. The lads laughed at him at first; but he is a stout fellow, is Claude, and as brave as a lion, and soon taught them to laugh the wrong side of their mouths; and now all the boys swear by him, and all the girls pray for him.

BEAUSEANT.

A promising youth, certainly! And why do they call him Prince?

LANDLORD.

Partly because he is at the head of them all, and partly because he has such a proud way with him, and wears such fine clothes — and, in short — looks like a prince.

BEAUSEANT.

And what could have turned the foolish fellow's brain? The Revolution, I suppose?

LANDLORD.

Yes — the Revolution that turns us all topsyturvy — the revolution of Love.

BEAUSEANT.

Romantic young Corydon! And with whom is he in love?

LANDLORD.

Why — but it is a secret, gentlemen.

BEAUSEANT.

Oh! certainly.

LANDLORD.

Why, then, I hear from his mother, good soul! *that* it is no less a person than the Beauty of Lyons, Pauline Deschappelles.

BEAUSEANT AND GLAVIS.

Ha! ha! Capital!

LANDLORD.

You may laugh, but it is as true as I stand here.

BEAUSEANT.

And what does the Beauty of Lyons say to his suit?

LANDLORD.

Lord, Sir, she never even condescended to look at him, though when he was a boy he worked in her father's garden.

BEAUSEANT.

Are you sure of that?

LANDLORD.

His mother says that Mademoiselle does not know him by sight.

BEAUSEANT (*taking Glavis aside*).

I have hit it, — I have it; — here is our revenge! Here is a prince for our haughty damsel. Do you take me?

GLAVIS.

Deuce take me if I do!

BEAUSEANT.

Blockhead! — it's as clear as a map. What if we could make this elegant clown pass himself off as a foreign prince? — lend him money, clothes, equipage for the purpose? — make him propose to Pauline! — marry Pauline? Would it not be delicious?

GLAVIS.

Ha! ha! — Excellent! But how shall we support the necessary expenses of his highness?

BEAUSEANT.

Pshaw! Revenge is worth a much larger sacrifice than a few hundred louis; — as for details, my valet is the trustiest fellow in the world, and shall have the appointment of his highness's establishment. Let's go to him at once, and see if he be really this Admirable Crichton.

GLAVIS.

With all my heart; — but the dinner?

BEAUSEANT.

Always thinking of dinner! Hark ye, Landlord, how far is it to young Melnotte's cottage? I should like to see such a prodigy.

LANDLORD.

Turn down the lane, — then strike across the common, — and you will see his mother's cottage.

BEAUSEANT.

True, he lives with his mother. — (*Aside*) We will not trust to an old woman's discretion; better send for him hither. I'll just step in and write him a note. Come, Glavis.

GLAVIS.

Yes, — Beauseant, Glavis, and Co., manufacturers of princes, wholesale and retail, — an uncommonly genteel line of business. But why so grave?

BEAUSEANT.

You think only of the sport, — I of the revenge.

[*Exeunt within the Inn.*]

SCENE III.

The Interior of Melnotte's Cottage; flowers placed here and there; a guitar on an oaken table, with a port-folio, &c.; a picture on an easel, covered by a curtain; fencing-foils crossed over the mantelpiece; an attempt at refinement in spite of the homeliness of the furniture, &c.; a staircase to the right conducts to the upper story.

(*Shout without*) — “Long live Claude Melnotte!”
“Long live the prince!”

THE WIDOW MELNOTTE.

Hark! — there's my dear son; — carried off the prize, I'm sure; and now he'll want to treat them all.

CLAUDE MELNOTTE (*opening the door.*)

What! you won't come in, my friends! Well, well, — there's a trifle to make merry elsewhere. Good day to you all,—Good day!

(*Shout*) — “Hurrah! Long live Prince Claude!”

(*Enter Claude Melnotte, with a rifle in his hand.*)

MELNOTTE.

Give me joy, dear mother! I've won the prize! — never missed one shot! Is it not handsome, this gun?

WIDOW.

Humph! Well, what is it worth, Claude?

MELNOTTE.

Worth! What is a ribbon worth to a soldier? Worth! — everything! Glory is priceless!

WIDOW.

Leave glory to great folks. Ah! Claude, castles in the air cost a vast deal to keep up! How is all this to end? What good does it to thee to learn Latin, and sing songs, and play on the guitar, and fence, and dance, and paint pictures? All very fine; but what does it bring in?

MELNOTTE.

Wealth! wealth, my mother! — Wealth to the mind — wealth to the heart — high thoughts — bright dreams — the hope of fame — the ambition to be worthier to love Pauline.

WIDOW.

My poor son! — The young lady will never think of thee.

MELNOTTE.

Do the stars think of us? Yet if the prisoner see them shine into his dungeon, would'st thou bid him

turn away from *their* lustre? Even so from this low cell, poverty, — I lift my eyes to Pauline and forget my chains.

(Goes to the picture and draws aside the curtain.)

See, this is her image — painted from memory. — Oh, how the canvas wrongs her!

(Takes up the brush and throws it aside.)

I shall never be a painter. I can paint no likeness but one, and that is above all art. I would turn soldier — France needs soldiers! But to leave the air that Pauline breathes! What is the hour? — so late? I will tell thee a secret, mother. Thou knowest that for the last six weeks I have sent every day the rarest flowers to Pauline; — she wears them. I have seen them on her breast. Ah, and then the whole universe seemed filled with odours! I have now grown more bold — I have poured my worship into poetry — I have sent the verses to Pauline — I have signed them with my own name. My messenger ought to be back by this time; I bade him wait for the answer.

WIDOW.

And what answer do you expect, Claude?

MELNOTTE.

That which the Queen of Navarre sent to the poor troubadour: — “Let me see the Oracle that can tell nations I am beautiful!” She will admit me. I shall hear her speak — I shall meet her eyes — I shall read upon her cheek the sweet thoughts that translate themselves into blushes. Then — then, oh, then, — she may forget that I am the peasant’s son!

WIDOW.

Nay, if she will but hear thee talk, Claude!

MELNOTTE.

I foresee it all. She will tell me that desert is the true rank. She will give me a badge — a flower — a glove! Oh, rapture! I shall join the armies of the Republic — I shall rise — I shall win a name that beauty will not blush to hear. I shall return with the right to say to her — “See, how love does not level the proud, but raise the humble!” Oh, how my heart swells within me! — Oh, what glorious Prophets of the Future are Youth and Hope!

(Knock at the door.)

WIDOW.

Come in.

(Enter Gaspar.)

MELNOTTE.

Welcome, Gaspar, welcome. Where is the letter? Why do you turn away, mag? where is the letter?—

(Gaspar gives him one.)

This!—This is mine, the one I entrusted to thee. Didst thou not leave it?

GASPAR.

Yes, I left it.

MELNOTTE.

My own verses returned to me. Nothing else?

GASPAR.

Thou wilt be proud to hear how thy messenger was honoured. For thy sake, Melnotte, — y have borne that which no Frenchman can bear without disgrace.

MELNOTTE.

Disgrace, Gaspar! Disgrace!

GASPAR.

I gave thy letter to the porter, who passed it from lackey to lackey till it reached the lady it was meant for.

MELNOTTE.

It reached her, then; — you are sure of that? It reached her,—well, well!

GASPAR.

It reached her, and was returned to me with blows. Dost hear, Melnotte? — with blows! Death! are we slaves still, that we are to be thus dealt with, we peasants?

MELNOTTE.

With blows? No, Gaspar, no; not blows!

GASPAR.

I could show thee the marks if it were not so deep a shame to bear them. The lackey who tossed thy letter into the mire swore that his lady and her mother never were so insulted. What could thy letter contain, Claude?

MELNOTTE (*looking over the letter.*)

Not a line that a serf might not have written to an empress. No, not one.

GASPAR.

They promise thee the same greeting they gave me, if thou wilt pass that way. Shall we endure this, Claude?

MELNOTTE (*wringing Gaspar's hand.*)

Forgive me, the fault was mine, I have brought this on thee; I will not forget it; thou shalt be avenged! The heartless insolence!

GAPSAR.

Thou art moved, Melnotte; think not of me; I would go through fire and water to serve thee; but, — a blow! It is not the *bruise* that galls, — it is the *blush*, Melnotte.

MELNOTTE.

Say, what message? — How insulted? — Wherefore? — What the offence?

GASPAR.

Did you not write to Pauline Deschappelles, the daughter of the rich merchant?

MELNOTTE.

Well?—

GASPER.

And are you not a peasant — a gardener's son? — that was the offence. Sleep on it, Melnotte. Blows to a French citizen, blows! [*Exit.*]

WIDOW.

Now you are cured, Claude!

MELNOTTE (*tearing the letter.*)

So do I scatter her image to the winds—I will stop her in the open streets — I will insult her — I will beat her menial ruffians—I will—

(*Turns suddenly to the Widow.*)

Mother, am I hump-backed—deformed—hideous?

WIDOW.

You!—

MELNOTTE.

A coward—a thief—a liar?

WIDOW.

You!

MELNOTTE.

Or a dull fool—a vain, drivelling, brainless idiot?

WIDOW.

No, no.

MELNOTTE.

What am I then — worse than all these? Why, I am a peasant! What has a peasant to do with love? Vain Revolutions, why lavish your cruelty on the great? Oh that we—we, the hewers of wood and drawers of water, had been swept away, so that the proud might learn what the world would be without us!—

(Knock at the door.)

(Enter Servant from the Inn.)

SERVANT.

A letter for Citizen Melnotte.

MELNOTTE.

A letter! from her perhaps—who sent thee?

SERVANT.

Why, Monsieur—I mean Citizen — Beauseant, who stops to dine at the Golden Lion, on his way to his chateau.

MELNOTTE.

Beauseant!—*(reads.)*

“Young man, I know thy secret—thou lovest above thy station: if thou hast wit, courage, and discretion, I can secure to thee the realization of thy most sanguine hopes; and the sole condition I ask in return is, that thou shalt be steadfast to thine own ends. I shall demand from thee a solemn oath to marry her whom thou lovest; to bear her to thine home on thy wedding night. I am serious—if thou would'st learn more, lose

not a moment, but follow the bearer of this letter to thy friend and patron,

“CHARLES BEAUSEANT.”

MELNOTTE.

Can I believe my eyes? Are our own passions the sorcerers that raise up for us spirits of good or evil? I will go instantly.

WIDOW.

What is this, Claude?

MELNOTTE.

“Marry her whom thou lovest” — “bear her to thine own home” — O, revenge and love! which of you is the strongest? — (*gazing on the picture*) Sweet face, thou smilest on me from the canvas: weak fool that I am, do I then love her still? No, it is the vision of my own romance that I have worshipped: it is the reality to which I bring scorn for scorn. — Adieu, mother! I will return anon. My brain reels — the earth swims before me, — (*looks again at the letter*) — No, it is *not* a mockery; I do *not* dream! [*Exit.*]

ACT II.

SCENE I.

*The Gardens of M. Deschappelles' House, at Lyons —
the House seen at the back of the Stage.*

(*Enter Beauseant and Glavis.*)

BEAUSEANT.

Well, what think you of my plot? Has it not succeeded to a miracle? The instant that I introduced His Highness the Prince of Como to the pompous mother

and the scornful daughter, it was all over with them: he came — he saw — he conquered: and, though it is not many days since he arrived, they have already promised him the hand of Pauline.

GLAVIS.

It is lucky, though, that you told them his Highness travelled incognito, for fear the Directory (who are not very fond of princes) should lay him by the heels; for he has a wonderful wish to keep up his rank, and scatters our gold about with as much coolness as if he were watering his own flower-pots.

BEAUSEANT.

True, he is damnably extravagant; I think the sly dog does it out of malice. However, it must be owned that he reflects credit on his loyal subjects, and makes a very pretty figure in his fine clothes, with my diamand snuff-box —

GLAVIS.

And my diamond ring! But do you think he will be firm to the last? I fancy I see symptoms of relenting: he will never keep up his rank, if he once let out his conscience.

BEAUSEANT.

His oath binds him; he cannot retract without being forsworn, and those low fellows are always superstitious! But, as it is, I tremble lest he be discovered: that bluff Colonel Damas (madame Deschappelles' cousin) evidently suspects him: we must make haste and conclude the farce: I have thought of a plan to end it this very day.

GLAVIS.

This very day! Poor Pauline! her dream will be soon over.

BEAUSEANT.

Yes, this day they shall be married! this evening, according to his oath, he shall carry his bride to the Golden Lion, and then pomp, equipage, retinue, and title, all shall vanish at once; and her Highness the Princess shall find that she has refused the son of a Marquis, to marry the son of a Gardener. — Oh, Pauline! once loved, now hated, yet still not relinquished, thou shalt drain the cup to the dregs, thou shalt know what it is to be humbled!

(Enter, from the House, Melnotte as the Prince of Como, leading in Pauline; Madame Deschappelles, fanning herself; and Colonel Damas.)

(Beauseant and Glavis bow respectfully. Pauline and Melnotte walk apart.)

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Good morning, gentlemen; really I am so fatigued with laughter; the dear Prince is so entertaining. What wit he has! Any one may see that he has spent his whole life in courts.

DAMAS.

And what the deuce do you know about courts, cousin Deschappelles? You women regard men just as you buy books — you never care what is in them, but how they are bound and lettered. S'death, I don't think you would even look at your Bible if it had not a title to it.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

How coarse you are, cousin Damas! — quite the manners of a barrack — you don't deserve to be one of our family; really we must drop your acquaintance when Pauline marries. I cannot patronise any relation that

would discredit my future son-in-law the Prince of Como.

MELNOTTE (*advancing.*)

These are beautiful gardens, Madame,—(*Beauseant and Glavis retire*)—who planned them?

MADAME DESCHAPP.

A gardener named Melnotte, your Highness — an honest man who knew his station. I can't say as much for his son — a presuming fellow, who — ha! ha! — actually wrote verses — such doggrel! to my daughter.

PAULINE.

Yes — how you would have laughed at them, Prince! — *you* who write such beautiful verses!

MELNOTTE.

This Melnotte must be a monstrous impudent person!

DAMAS.

Is he good-looking?

MADAME DESCHAPP.

I never notice such *canaille* — an ugly, mean-looking clown, if I remember right.

DAMAS.

Yet I heard your porter say he was wonderfully like his Highness.

MELNOTTE (*taking snuff.*)

You are complimentary.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

For shame, cousin Damas! — like the Prince, indeed!

PAULINE.

Like you! Ah, mother, like our beautiful Prince! I'll never speak to you again, cousin Damas.

MELNOTTE (*aside.*)

Humph! — rank is a great beautifier! I never passed for an Apollo while I was a peasant; if I am so handsome as a prince, what should I be as an emperor? — (*aloud*) Monsier Beauseant, will you honour me? (*offers snuff.*)

BEAUSEANT.

No, your Highness; I have no small vices.

MELNOTTE.

Nay, if it were a vice you'd be sure to have it, Monsieur Beauseant.

MADAME DESDHAPP.

Ha! ha! — how very severe! — what wit!

BEAUSEANT (*in a rage and aside.*)

Curse his impertinence!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

What a superb snuff-box!

PAULINE.

And what a beautiful ring!

MELNOTTE.

You like the box — a trifle — interesting perhaps from associations — a present from Louis XIV. to my great-great-grandmother. Honour me by accepting it.

BEAUSEANT (*plucking him by the sleeve.*)

How! — what the devil! My boy — are you mad? It is worth five hundred louis.

MELNOTTE (*unheeding him, and turning to Pauline.*)

And you like this ring? Ah, it has, indeed, a lustre since your eyes have shone on it (*placing it on her finger*). Henceforth hold me, sweet enchantress, the Slave of the Ring.

GLAVIS (*pulling him.*)

Stay, stay — what are you about? My maiden aunt's legacy — a diamond of the first water. You shall be hanged for swindling, Sir.

MELNOTTE (*pretending not to hear.*)

It is curious, this ring; it is the one with which my grand-father, the Doge of Venice, married the Adriatic!

(*Madame and Pauline examine the ring.*)

MELNOTTE (*to Beauseant and Glavis.*)

Fie, gentlemen, princes must be generous! — (*turns to Damas, who watches them closely.*) These kind friends have my interest so much at heart, that they are as careful of my property as if it were their own!

BEAUSEANT AND GLAVIS (*confusedly.*)

Ha! ha! — very good joke that!

(*Appear to remonstrate with Melnotte in dumb show.*)

DAMAS.

What's all that whispering? I am sure there is some juggle here; hang me, if I think he is an Italian, after all. Gad! I'll try him. *Servitore umilissimo, Eccellenza.**

MELNOTTE.

Hum — what does he mean, I wonder?

DAMAS.

Godo di vedervi in buona salute.**

MELNOTTE.

Hem — hem!

DAMAS.

Fa bel tempo — che si dice di nuovo?***

* Your Excellency's most humble servant.

** I am glad to see you in good health.

*** Fine weather! What news is there?

MELNOTTE.

Well, Sir, what's all that gibberish?

DAMAS.

Oh, oh! — only Italian, your Highness! — The Prince of Como does not understand his own language!

MELNOTTE.

Not as you pronounce it, — who the deuce could?

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Ha! ha! cousin Damas, never pretend to what you don't know.

PAULINE.

Ha! ha! cousin Damas; *you* speak Italian, indeed!
(*makes a mocking gesture at him.*)

BEAUSEANT (*to Glavis.*)

Clever dog! — how ready!

GLAVIS.

Ready, yes; with my diamond ring! — Damn his readiness!

DAMAS.

Laugh at me! — laugh at a Colonel in the French army! — The fellow's an impostor; I know he is. I'll see if he understands fighting as well as he does Italian. — (*Goes up to him, and aside*) Sir, you are a jackanapes! — Can you construe that?

MELNOTTE.

No, Sir; I never construe affronts in the presence of ladies; by-and-by I shall be happy to take a lesson — or give one.

DAMAS.

I'll find the occasion, never fear!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Where are you going, cousin?

DAMAS.

To correct my Italian.

[*Exit.*

BEAUSEANT (*to Glavis.*)

Let us after, and pacify him; he evidently suspects something.

GLAVIS.

Yes! but my diamond ring!

BEAUSEANT.

And my box! — We are over-taxed, fellow-subject! — we must stop the supplies, and dethrone the Prince!

GLAVIS.

Prince! — he ought to be heir apparent to King Stork! [Exeunt.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Dare I ask your Highness to forgive my cousin's insufferable vulgarity?

PAULINE.

Oh, yes! — you will forgive his manner for the sake of his heart.

MELNOTTE.

And the sake of his cousin. — Ah, Madame, there is one comfort in rank, — we are so sure of our position that we are not easily affronted. Besides, M. Damas has bought the right of indulgence from his friends, by never showing it to his enemies.

PAULINE.

Ah! he is, indeed, as brave in action as he is rude in speech. He rose from the ranks to his present grade, — and in two years!

MELNOTTE.

In two years! — two years, did you say?

MADAME DESCHAPP. (*aside.*)

I don't like leaving girls alone with their lovers; but, with a prince, it would be so ill-bred to be prudish.

[*Exit.*

MELNOTTE.

You can be proud of your connexion with one who owes his position to merit, — not birth.

PAULINE.

Why, yes; but still —

MELNOTTE.

Still what, Pauline?

PAULINE.

There is something glorious in the Heritage of Command. A man who has ancestors is like a Representative of the Past.

MELNOTTE.

True; but, like other representatives, nine times out of ten he is a silent member. Ah, Pauline! not to the Past, but to the Future, looks true nobility, and finds its blazon in posterity.

PAULINE.

You say this to please me, who have no ancestors; but you, Prince, must be proud of so illustrious a race!

MELNOTTE.

No, no! I would not, were I fifty times a prince, be a pensioner on the Dead! I honour birth and ancestry when they are regarded as the incentives to exertion, not the title-deeds to sloth! I honour the laurels that overshadow the graves of our fathers; — it is our fathers

I emulate, when I desire that beneath the evergreen I myself have planted my own ashes may repose! Dearest! could'st thou but see with my eyes!

PAULINE.

I cannot forego pride when I look on thee, and think that thou lovest me. Sweet Prince, tell me again of thy palace by the Lake of Como; it is so pleasant to hear of thy splendours since thou didst swear to me that they would be desolate without Pauline; and when thou describest them, it is with a mocking lip and a noble scorn, as if custom had made thee disdain greatness.

MELNOTTE.

Nay, dearest, nay, if thou wouldst have me paint
The home to which, could Love fulfil its prayers,
This hand would lead thee, listen* — a deep vale
Shut out by Alpine hills from the rude world;
Near a clear lake, margined by fruits of gold
And whispering myrtles; glassing softest skies
As cloudless, save with rare and roseate shadows,
As I would have thy fate!

PAULINE.

My own dear love!

MELNOTTE.

A palace lifting to eternal summer
Its marble walls, from out a glossy bower

* The reader will observe that Melnotte evades the request of Pauline. He proceeds to describe a home, which he does not say he possesses, but to which he would lead her, "*could Love fulfil its prayers.*" This caution is intended as a reply to a sagacious critic who censures the description, because it is not an exact and prosaic inventory of the characteristics of the Lake of Como! — When Melnotte, for instance, talks of birds "that syllable the name of Pauline," (by the way a literal translation from an Italian poet,) he is not thinking of ornithology, but probably of the Arabian Nights. He is venting the extravagant, but natural enthusiasm of the Poet and the Lover.

Of coolest foliage musical with birds,
 Whose songs should syllable thy name! At noon
 We'd sit beneath the arching vines, and wonder
 Why Earth could be unhappy, while the Heavens
 Still left us youth and love! We'd have no friends
 That were not lovers; no ambition, save
 To excel them all in love; we'd read no books
 That were not tales of love — that we might smile
 To think how poorly eloquence of words
 Translates the poetry of hearts like ours!
 And when night came, amidst the breathless Heavens
 We'd guess what star should be our home when love
 Becomes immortal; while the perfumed light
 Stole through the mists of alabaster lamps,
 And every air was heavy with the sighs
 Of orange groves and music from sweet lutes,
 And murmurs of low fountains that gush forth
 In the midst of roses! — Dost thou like the picture?

PAULINE.

Oh! as the bee upon the flower, I hang
 Upon the honey of thy eloquent tongue!
 Am I not blest? And if I love too wildly,
 Who would not love thee like Pauline?

MELNOTTE (*bitterly.*)

Oh, false one!

It is the *prince* thou lovest, not the *man*;
 If in the stead of luxury, pomp, and power,
 I had painted poverty, and toil, and care,
 Thou hadst found no honey on my tongue; — Pauline,
 That is not love!

PAULINE.

Thou wrong'st me, cruel Prince!

'Tis true I might not at the first been won,
 Save through the weakness of a flattered pride;
 But *now*, — Oh! trust me, — could'st thou fall from power,
 And sink —

MELNOTTE.

As low as that poor gardener's son
 Who dared to lift his eyes to thee.

PAULINE.

Even then
 Methinks thou would'st be only made more dear
 By the sweet thought that I could prove how deep
 Is woman's love! We are like insects, caught
 By the poor glittering of a garish flame;
 But, oh, the wings once scorched, — the brightest star
 Lures us no more; and by the fatal light
 We cling till death!

MELNOTTE.

Angel!

(*Aside.*) O conscience! conscience!
 It must not be; — her love hath grown a torture
 Worse than her hate. I will at once to Beauseant,
 And — ha! he comes — Sweet love, one moment leave me.
 I have business with these gentlemen — I — I
 Will forthwith joint you.

PAULINE.

Do not tarry long! [Exit.
 (*Enter Beauseant and Glavis.*)

MELNOTTE.

Release me from my oath, — I will not marry her!

BEAUSEANT.

Then thou art perjured.

MELNOTTE.

No, I was not in my senses when I swore to thee to marry her! I was blind to all but her scorn! — deaf to all but my passion and my rage! Give me back my poverty and my honour!

BEAUSEANT.

It is too late, — you must marry her! and this day. I have a story already coined, and sure to pass current. This Damas suspects thee, — he will set the police to work; — thou wilt be detected — Pauline will despise and execrate thee. Thou wilt be sent to the common gaol as a swindler.

MELNOTTE.

Fiend!

BEAUSEANT.

And in the heat of the girl's resentment (you know of what resentment is capable) and the parent's shame, she will be induced to marry the first that offers — even perhaps your humble servant.

MELNOTTE.

You! No; that were worse — for thou hast no mercy! I will marry her — I will keep my oath. Quick, then, with the damnable invention thou art hatching; — quick, if thou would'st not have me strangle thee or myself.

GLAVIS.

What a tiger! Too fierce for a Prince; he ought to have been the Grand Turk.

BEAUSEANT.

Enough — I will despatch; be prepared.

[Exeunt Beauseant and Glavis.]

(Enter Damas with two swords.)

DAMAS.

Now, then, Sir, the ladies are no longer your excuse. I have brought you a couple of dictionaries; let us see if your Highness can find out the Latin for *bilbo*.

MELNOTTE.

Away, Sir! — I am in no humour for jesting.

DAMAS.

I see you understand something of the grammar; you decline the noun substantive “small sword” with great ease; but that won’t do — you must take a lesson in *parsing*.

MELNOTTE.

Fool!

DAMAS.

Sir, — a man who calls me a fool insults the lady who bore me; there’s no escape for you — fight you shall, or —

MELNOTTE.

Oh, enough, enough! — take your ground.

(They fight; Damas is disarmed. — Melnotte takes up the sword and returns it to Damas respectfully.)

A just punishment to the brave soldier who robs the State of its best property — the sole right to his valour and his life.

DAMAS.

Sir, you fence exceedingly well; you must be a man of honour — I don’t care a jot whether you are a prince; but a man who has *carte and tierce* at his fingers’ ends must be a gentleman.

MELNOTTE (*aside*.)

Gentleman! Ay, I was a gentleman before I turned conspirator; for honest men are the gentlemen of Nature! Colonel, they tell me you rose from the ranks.

I did.

DAMAS.

MELNOTTE.

And in two years?

DAMAS.

It is true; that's no wonder in our army at present. Why, the oldest general in the service is scarcely thirty, and we have some of two-and-twenty.

MELNOTTE.

Two-and-twenty!

DAMAS.

Yes; in the French army, now-a-days, promotion is not a matter of purchase. We are all heroes because we may be all generals. We have no fear of the cypress because we may all hope for the laurel.

MELNOTTE.

A general at two-and-twenty (*turning away*). — Sir, I may ask you a favour one of these days.

DAMAS.

Sir, I shall be proud to grant it. — It is astonishing how much I like a man after I've fought with. —
(*Hides the swords.*)

(*Enter Madame and Beauseant.*)

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Oh, Prince! — Prince! — What do I hear? You must fly, — you must quit us!

MELNOTTE.

I! —

BEAUSEANT.

Yes, Prince; read this letter, just received from my friend at Paris, one of the Directory; they suspect you of designs against the Republic; they are very

suspicious of princes, and your family take part with the Austrians. Knowing that I introduced your Highness at Lyons, my friend writes to me to say that you must quit the town immediately or you will be arrested, — thrown into prison, — perhaps guillotined! Fly! — I will order horses to your carriage, instantly. Fly to Marseilles; there you can take ship to Leghorn.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

And what's to become of Pauline? Am I not to be mother to a princess, after all?

(Enter Pauline and M. Deschappelles.)

PAULINE *(throwing herself into Melnotte's arms)*.

You must leave us! — Leave Pauline!

BEAUSEANT.

Not a moment is to be wasted.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

I will go to the magistrates and inquire —

BEAUSEANT.

Then he is lost; the magistrates, hearing he is suspected, will order his arrest.

MADAME DESCHAP.

And I shall not be Princess Dowager!

BEAUSEANT.

Why not? There is only one thing to be done: — send for the priest — let the marriage take place at once, and the Prince carry home a bride!

MELNOTTE.

Impossible! — *(aside)* Villain! — I know not what I say.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

What, lose my child?

BEAUSEANT.

And gain a Princess!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Oh, Monsieur Beauseant, you are so very kind, — it must be so, — we ought not to be selfish, — my daughter's happiness is at stake. She will go away, too, in a carriage and six!

PAULINE.

Thou art here still, — I cannot part from thee, — my heart will break.

MELNOTTE.

But thou wilt not consent to this hasty union, — thou wilt not wed an outcast — a fugitive.

PAULINE.

Ah! If thou art in danger, who should share it but Pauline?

MELNOTTE (*aside*).

Distraction! — If the earth could swallow me!

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Gently! — gently! The settlements — the contracts — my daughter's dowry!

MELNOTTE.

The dowry! — I am not base enough for that; no, not one farthing!

BEAUSEANT (*to Madame*).

Noble fellow! Really your good husband is too mercantile in these matters. Monsieur Deschappelles, you hear his Highness: we can arrange the settlements by proxy, — 'tis the way with people of quality.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

But —

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Hold your tongue! — Don't expose yourself!

BEAUSEANT.

I will bring the priest in a trice. Go in all of you

and prepare; — the carriage shall be at the door before the ceremony is over.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Be sure there are six horses, Beauseant! You are very good to have forgiven us for refusing you: but, you see — a prince!

BEAUSEANT.

And such a prince! Madame, I cannot blush at the success of so illustrious a rival. — (*aside*) Now will I follow them to the village — enjoy my triumph, and to-morrow — in the hour of thy shame and grief, I think, proud girl, thou wilt prefer even these arms to those of the gardener's son. [*Exit Beauseant.*]

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Come, Monsieur Deschappelles — give your arm to her Highness that is to be.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

I don't like doing business in such a hurry — 'tis not the way with the house of Deschappelles and Co.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

There, now — you fancy you are in the counting-house — don't you? (*pushes him to Pauline*).

MELNOTTE.

Stay, — stay, Pauline — one word. Have you no scruple — no fear? Speak — it is not yet too late.

PAULINE.

When I loved thee, thy fate became mine. Triumph or danger — joy or sorrow — I am by thy side.

DAMAS.

Well, well, Prince, thou art a lucky man to be so loved. She is a good little girl in spite of her foibles — make her as happy as if she were not to be a princess (*slapping him on the shoulder*). Come, Sir,

I wish you joy — young — tender — lovely; —
zounds, I envy you!

MELNOTTE (*who has stood apart in gloomy abstraction.*)

Do you? *

* On the stage the following lines are added: —

“Do you? Wise judges are we of each other.

“Woo, wed, and bear her home!” So runs the bond

To which I sold myself — and then — what then?

Away! — I will not look beyond the Hour.

Like children in the dark, I dare not face

The shades that gather round me in the distance.

You envy me — I thank you — you may read

My joy upon my brow — I thank you, Sir!

If hearts had audible language, you would hear

How mine would answer when you talk of *envy*!

ACT III.

SCENE I.

The Exterior of the Golden Lion — time, twilight.

The moon rises during the Scene.

(*Enter Landlord and his Daughter from the Inn.*)

LANDLORD.

Ha — ha — ha! Well, I never shall get over it.
Our Claude is a prince with a vengeance now. His
carriage breaks down at my inn — ha — ha!

JANET.

And what airs the young lady gives herself! “Is
this the best room you have, young woman?” with
such a toss of the head!

LANDLORD.

Well, get in, Janet; get in and see to the supper:
the servants must sup before they go back.

[*Exeunt Landlord and Janet.*]

(Enter Beauseant and Glavis.)

BEAUSEANT.

You see our Princess is lodged at last — one stage more, and she'll be at her journey's end — the beautiful palace at the foot of the Alps! — ha — ha!

GLAVIS.

Faith, I pity the poor Pauline — especially if she's going to sup at the Golden Lion *(makes a wry face)*. I shall never forget that cursed ragout.

(Enter Melnotte from the Inn.)

BEAUSEANT.

Your servant, my Prince; you reigned most worthily. I condole with you on your abdication. I am afraid that your Highness's retinue are not very faithful servants. I think they will quit you in the moment of your fall — 'tis the fate of greatness. But you are welcome to your fine clothes — also the diamond snuff-box, which Louis XIV. gave to your great-great-grandmother.

GLAVIS.

And the ring, whith which your grandfather the Doge of Venice married the Adriatic.

MELNOTTE.

I have kept my oath, gentlemen, say — have I kept my oath?

BEAUSEANT.

Most religiously.

MELNOTTE.

Then you have done with me and mine — away with you!

BEAUSEANT.

How, knave?

MELNOTTE.

Look you, our bond is over. Proud conquerors that we are, we have won the victory over a simple girl — compromised her honour — embittered her life — blasted, in their very blossoms, all the flowers of her youth. This is your triumph, — it is my shame! (*Turns to BEAUSEANT.*) Enjoy that triumph, but not in my sight. I *was* her betrayer — I *am* her protector! Cross but her path — one word of scorn, one look of insult — nay, but one quiver of that mocking lip, and I will teach thee that bitter word thou hast graved eternally in this heart — *Repentance!*

BEAUSEANT.

His Highness is most grandiloquent.

MELNOTTE.

Highness me no more. Beware! Remorse has made me a new being. Away with you! There is danger in me. Away!

GLAVIS (*aside.*)

He's an awkward fellow to deal with: come away, Beauseant.

BEAUSEANT.

I know the respect due to rank. Adieu, my Prince. Any commands at Lyons? Yet hold — I promised you 200 louis on your wedding-day; here they are.

MELNOTTE (*dashing the purse to the ground*).

I gave you revenge, I did not sell it. Take up your silver, Judas; take it. Ay, it is fit you should learn to stoop.

BEAUSEANT.

You will beg my pardon for this some day. (*Aside to GLAVIS.*) Come to my chateau — I shall return hither to-morrow, to learn how Pauline likes her new dignity.

MELNOTTE.

Are you not gone yet?

BEAUSEANT.

Your Highness's most obedient, most faithful —

GLAVIS.

And most humble servants. Ha! ha!

[*Exeunt Beauseant and Glavis.*]

MELNOTTE.

Thank Heaven, I had no weapon, or I should have slain them. Wretch! what can I say? Where turn? On all sides mockery — the very boors within — (*Laughter from the inn.*) — 'Sdeath, if even in this short absence the exposure should have chanced. I will call her. We will go hence, I have already sent one I can trust to my mother's house. There at least none can insult her agony — gloat upon her shame! There alone must she learn what a villain she has sworn to love.

(*As he turns to the door, enter Pauline from the Inn.*)

PAULINE.

Ah, my Lord, what a place! I never saw such rude people. They stare and wink so. I think the very sight of a prince, though he travels incognito, turns their honest heads. What a pity the carriage should break down in such a spot! You are not well — the drops stand on your brow — your hand is feverish.

MELNOTTE.

Nay, it is but a passing spasm; the air —

PAULINE.

Is not the soft air of your native south.
How pale he is! — indeed thou art not well.
Where are our people? I will call them.

MELNOTTE.

Hold!

I — I am well.

PAULINE.

Thou art! — Ah! now I know it.
 Thou fanciest, my kind Lord — I know thou dost —
 Thou fanciest these rude walls, these rustic gossips,
 Brick'd floors, sour wine, coarse viands, vex Pauline;
 And so they might, but thou art by my side,
 And I forget all else!

*(Enter Landlord, the servants peeping and laughing
 over his shoulder.)*

LANDLORD.

My lord — your Highness —
 Will your most noble Excellency choose —

MELNOTTE.

Begone, Sir!

[Exit Landlord, laughing.]

PAULINE.

How could they have learn'd thy rank?
 One's servants are so vain! — nay, let it not
 Chafe thee, sweet Prince! — a few short days, and we
 Shall see thy palace by its lake of silver,
 And — nay, nay, Spendthrift, is thy wealth of smiles
 Already drained, or dost thou play the miser?

MELNOTTE.

Thine eyes would call up smiles in deserts, fair one.
 Let us escape these rustics. Close at hand
 There is a cot, where I have bid prepare
 Our evening lodgment — a rude, homely roof,
 But honest, where our welcome will not be
 Made torture by the vulgar eyes and tongues
 That are as death to Love! A heavenly night!
 The wooing air and the soft moon invite us.

Wilt walk! I pray thee, now, — I know the path,
Ay, every inch of it!

PAULINE.

What, *thou!* methought
Thou wert a stranger in these parts. Ah! truant,
Some village beauty lured thee; — thou art now
Grown constant.

MELNOTTE.

Trust me.

PAULINE.

Princes are so changeful!

MELNOTTE.

Come, dearest, come.

PAULINE.

Shall I not call our people
To light us?

MELNOTTE.

Heaven will lend its stars for torches!
It is not far.

PAULINE.

The night breeze chills me.

MELNOTTE.

Nay.

Let me thus mantle thee; — it is not cold.

PAULINE.

Never beneath thy smile!

MELNOTTE (*aside.*)

Oh, Heaven! forgive me!

[*Exeunt.*]

S C E N E II.

Melnotte's cottage — Widow bustling about — A table spread for supper.

WIDOW.

So, I think that looks very neat. He sent me a line, so blotted that I can scarcely read it, to say he would be here almost immediately. She must have loved him well, indeed, to have forgotten his birth; for though he was introduced to her in disguise, he is too honourable not to have revealed to her the artifice which her love only could forgive. Well, I do not wonder at it; for though my son is not a prince, he ought to be one, and that's almost as good. (*Knock at the door.*) Ah! here they are.

(*Enter Melnotte and Pauline.*)

WIDOW.

Oh, my boy — the pride of my heart! — welcome, welcome! I beg pardon, Ma'am, but I do love him so!

PAULINE.

Good woman, I really — why, Prince, what is this? — does the old lady know you? Oh, I guess, you have done her some service: another proof of your kind heart, is it not?

MELNOTTE.

Of my kind heart, ay!

PAULINE.

So you know the Prince?

WIDOW.

Know him, Madam? — ah, I begin to fear it is you who know him not!

PAULINE.

Do you think she is mad? Can we stay here, my Lord? I think there's something very wild about her.

MELNOTTE.

Madam, I — no, I can not tell her, my knees knock together: what a coward is a man who has lost his honour! Speak to her — speak to her (*to his Mother*) — tell her that — Oh, Heaven, that I were dead!

PAULINE.

How confused he looks! — this strange place — this woman — what can it mean? — I half suspect — who are you, madam? — who are you? can't you speak? are you struck dumb?

WIDOW.

Claude, you have not deceived her? — Ah, shame upon you! I thought that, before you went to the altar, she was to have known all.

PAULINE.

All! what? My blood freezes in my veins!

WIDOW.

Poor lady! — dare I tell her, Claude?

(*Melnotte makes a sign of assent.*)

Know you not then, Madam, that this young man is of poor though honest parents? Know you not that you are wedded to my son, Claude Melnotte?

PAULINE.

Your son! hold — hold! do not speak to me — (*approaches Melnotte, and lays her hand on his arm*) Is this a jest? is it? I know it is, only speak — one word — one look — one smile. I cannot believe — I who loved thee so — I cannot believe that thou art such a — No, I will not wrong thee by a harsh word — speak!

MELNOTTE.

Leave us — have pity on her, on me: leave us.

WIDOW.

Oh, Claude, that I should live to see thee bowed
by shame! thee of whom I was so proud!

[*Exit Widow by the staircase.*]

PAULINE.

Her son — her son —

MELNOTTE.

Now, lady, hear me.

PAULINE.

Hear thee!

Ay, speak — her son! have fiends a parent? speak,
That thou may'st silence curses — speak!

MELNOTTE.

No, curse me:

Thy curse would blast me less than thy forgiveness.

PAULINE (*laughing wildly*).

“This is thy palace, where the perfumed light
“Steals through the mist of alabaster lamps,
“And every air is heavy with the sighs
“Of orange groves, and music from sweet lutes,
“And murmurs of low fountains, that gush forth
“I’ the midst of roses! Dost thou like the picture?”
This is my bridal home, and thou my bridegroom!
O fool — O dupe — O wretch! — I see it all —
The bye-word and the jeer of every tongue
In Lyons. Hast thou in thy heart one touch
Of human kindness? if thou hast, why, kill me,
And save thy wife from madness. No, it cannot —
It cannot be: this is some horrid dream:
I shall wake soon. — (*touching him*) Art flesh? art man? or
The shadows seen in sleep? — It is too real. [but
What have I done to thee? how sinn’d against thee,
That thou should’st crush me thus?

MELNOTTE.

Pauline, by pride
Angels have fallen ere thy time: by pride —
That sole alloy of thy most lovely mould —
The evil spirit of a bitter love,
And a revengeful heart, had power upon thee. —
From my first years, my soul was fill'd with thee:
I saw thee midst the flow'rs the lowly boy
Tended, unmark'd by thee — a spirit of bloom,
And joy, and freshness, as if Spring itself
Were made a living thing, and wore thy shape!
I saw thee, and the passionate heart of man
Enter'd the breast of the wild-dreaming boy;
And from that hour I grew — what to the last
I shall be — thine adorer! Well; this love,
Vain, frantic, guilty, if thou wilt, became
A fountain of ambition and bright hope;
I thought of tales that by the winter hearth
Old gossips tell — how maidens sprung from Kings
Have stoop'd from their high sphere; how Love, like Death,
Levels all ranks, and lays the shepherd's crook
Beside the sceptre. Thus I made my home
In the soft palace of a fairy Future!
My father died; and I, the peasant-born,
Was my own lord. Then did I seek to rise
Out of the prison of my mean estate;
And, with such jewels as the exploring Mind
Brings from the caves of Knowledge, buy my ransom
From those twin gaolers of the daring heart —
Low Birth and iron Fortune. Thy bright image,
Glass'd in my soul, took all the hues of glory,
And lured me on to those inspiring toils
By which man masters men! For thee I grew

A midnight student o'er the dreams of sages!
 For thee I sought to borrow from each Grace,
 And every Muse, such attributes as lend
 Ideal charms to Love. I thought of thee,
 And Passion taught me poesy — of thee,
 And on the painter's canvas grew the life
 Of beauty! — Art became the shadow
 Of the dear starlight of thy haunting eyes!
 Men call'd me vain — some mad — I heeded not;
 But still toiled on — hoped on — for it was sweet,
 If not to win, to feel more worthy thee!

PAULINE.

Has he a magic to exorcise hate?

MELNOTTE.

At last, in one mad hour, I dared to pour
 The thoughts that burst their channels into song,
 And sent them to thee — such a tribute, lady,
 As beauty rarely scorns, even from the meanest.
 The name — appended by the burning heart
 That long'd to show its idol what bright things
 It had created — yea, the enthusiast's name,
 That should have been by triumph, was thy scorn!
 That very hour — when passion, turned to wrath,
 Resembled hatred most — when thy disdain
 Made my whole soul a chaos — in that hour
 The tempters found me a revengeful tool
 For their revenge! Thou hadst trampled on the worm —
 It turn'd and stung thee!

PAULINE.

Love, Sir, hath no sting.
 What was the slight of a poor powerless girl
 To the deep wrong of this most vile revenge?
 Oh, how I loved this man! — a serf! — a slave!

MELNOTTE.

Hold, lady! — No, not slave! Despair is free!
 I will not tell thee of the throes — the struggles —
 The anguish — the remorse: No — let it pass!
 And let me come to such most poor atonement
 Yet in my power, Pauline! — —

*(Approaching her with great emotion, and about to
 take her hand.)*

PAULINE.

No, touch me not!
 I know my fate. You are, by law, my tyrant;
 And I — oh Heaven! — a peasant's wife! I'll work —
 Toil — drudge — do what thou wilt — but touch me not;
 Let my wrongs make me sacred!

MELNOTTE.

Do not fear me.
 Thou dost not know me, Madam: at the altar
 My vengeance ceased — my guilty oath expired!
 Henceforth, no image of some marble saint,
 Nich'd in cathedral aisles, is hallow'd more
 From the rude hand of sacrilegious wrong.
 I am thy husband — nay, thou need'st not shudder; —
 Here, at thy feet, I lay a husband's rights.
 A marriage thus unholy — unfulfilled —
 A bond of fraud — is, by the laws of France,
 Made void and null. To-night sleep — sleep in peace.
 To-morrow, pure and virgin as this morn
 I bore thee, bathed in blushes, from the shrine,
 Thy father's arms shall take thee to thy home.
 The law shall do thee justice, and restore
 Thy right to bless another with thy love.
 And when thou art happy, and hast half forgot

Him who so loved — so wrong'd thee, think at least
Heaven left some remnant of the angel still
In that poor peasant's nature!

Ho! my mother!

(Enter Widow.)

Conduct this lady — (she is not my wife;
She is our guest, — our honour'd guest, my mother!) —
To the poor chamber, where the sleep of virtue,
Never, beneath my father's honest roof,
Ev'n villains dared to mar! Now, lady, now,
I think thou wilt believe me. — Go, my mother!

WIDOW.

She is not thy wife! —

MELNOTTE.

Hush! hush! for mercy's sake!
Speak not, but go.

*(Widow ascends the stairs; Pauline follows, weeping
— turns to look back.)*

MELNOTTE *(sinking down.)*

All angels bless and guard her!

ACT IV.

SCENE I.

*The Cottage as before — Melnotte seated before a table —
writing implements, &c. — (Day breaking.)*

MELNOTTE.

Hush, hush! — she sleeps at last! — thank Heaven,
for awhile, she forgets even that I live! Her sobs, which
have gone to my heart the whole, long, desolate night,
have ceased! — all calm — all still! I will go now; I

will send this letter to Pauline's father — when he arrives, I will place in his hands my own consent to the divorce, and then, O France, my country! accept among thy protectors, thy defenders — the Peasant's Son! Our country is less proud than Custom, and does not refuse the blood, the heart, the right hand of the poor man!

— (*Enter Widow.*)

WIDOW.

My son, thou hast acted ill, but sin brings its own punishment. In the hour of thy remorse, it is not for a mother to reproach thee!

MELNOTTE.

What is past is past. There is a future left to all men, who have the virtue to repent and the energy to atone. Thou shalt be proud of thy son, yet. Meanwhile, remember this poor lady has been grievously injured. For the sake of thy son's conscience, respect, honour, bear with her. If she weep, console—if she chide, be silent! 'Tis but a little while more — I shall send an express fast as horse can speed to her father. Farewell! — I shall return shortly.

WIDOW.

It is the only course left to thee — thou wert led astray, but thou art not hardened. Thy heart is right still, as ever it was, when in thy most ambitious hopes, thou wert never ashamed of thy poor mother!

MELNOTTE.

Ashamed of thee! — No, if I yet endure, yet live, yet hope — it is only because I would not die till I have redeemed the noble heritage I have lost — the heritage I took unstained from thee and my dead father — a proud conscience and an honest name. I shall win them back yet — Heaven bless you! [*Exit.*]

WIDOW.

My dear Claude! — How my heart bleeds for him!
(*Pauline looks down from above, and after a pause descends.*)

PAULINE.

Not here! — he spares me that pain at least: so far he is considerate — yet the place seems still more desolate without him. Oh, that I could hate him — the gardener's son! — and yet how nobly he — no — no — no, I will not be so mean a thing as to forgive him!

WIDOW.

Good morning, Madam; I would have waited on you if I had known you were stirring.

PAULINE.

It is no matter, Ma'am — your son's wife ought to wait on herself.

WIDOW.

My son's wife — le not that thought vex you, Madam — he tells me that you will have your divorce. And I hope I shall live to see him smile again. There are maidens in this village, young and fair, Madam, who may yet console him.

PAULINE.

I dare say — they are very welcome — and when the divorce is got, he will marry again. I am sure I hope so (*weeps.*)

WIDOW.

He could have married the richest girl in the province, if he had pleased it; but his head was turned, poor child! — he could think of nothing but you (*weeps.*)

PAULINE.

Don't weep, *mother*!

WIDOW.

Ah, he has behaved very ill, I know — but love is so headstrong in the young. Don't weep, Madam.

PAULINE.

So, as you were saying — go on.

WIDOW.

Oh, I cannot excuse him, Ma'am — he was not in his right senses.

PAULINE.

But he always — always (*sobbing*) loved — loved me then.

WIDOW.

He thought of nothing else — see here — he learnt to paint that he might take your likeness (*uncovers the picture*). But that's all over now — I trust you have cured him of his folly — but, dear heart, you have had no breakfast!

PAULINE.

I can't take anything — don't trouble yourself.

WIDOW.

Nay, Madam, be persuaded; a little coffee will refresh you. Our milk and eggs are excellent. I will get out Claude's coffee cup — it is of real Sèvres; he saved up all his money to buy it three years ago, because the name of *Pauline* was inscribed on it.

PAULINE.

Three years ago! Poor Claude! Thank you. I think I will have some coffee. Oh! if he were but a poor gentleman, even a merchant: but a gardener's son — and what a home! — Oh no, it is too dreadful!

(*They seat themselves at the table — Beauseant opens the lattice and looks in.*)

BEAUSEANT.

So — so — the coast is clear! I saw Claude in the lane — I shall have an excellent opportunity.

(Shuts the lattice, and knocks at the door.)

PAULINE *(starting.)*

Can it be my father? — he has not sent for him yet? No, he cannot be in such a hurry to get rid of me?

WIDOW.

It is not time for your father to arrive yet; it must be some neighbour.

PAULINE.

Don't admit any one.

(Widow opens the door — Beauseant pushes her aside, and enters.)

Ah! Heavens! that hateful Beauseant! This is indeed bitter!

BEAUSEANT.

Good morning, Madam! Oh, Widow, your son begs you will have the goodness to go to him in the village — he wants to speak to you on particular business; you'll find him at the inn, or the grocer's shop, or the baker's, or at some other friend's of your family — make haste!

PAULINE.

Don't leave me, mother! — don't leave me!

BEAUSEANT *(with great respect.)*

Be not alarmed, Madam. Believe me your friend — your servant.

PAULINE.

Sir, I have no fear of you, even in this house! Go, Madam, if your son wishes it; I will not contradict his

commands whilst, at least, he has still the right to be obeyed.

WIDOW.

I don't understand this; however, I shan't be long gone. [Exit.

PAULINE.

Sir, I divine the object of your visit — you wish to exult in the humiliation of one who humbled you. Be it so; I am prepared to endure all — even your presence!

BEAUSEANT.

You mistake me, Madam — Pauline, you mistake me! I come to lay my fortune at your feet. You must already be disenchanted with this impostor; these walls are not worthy to be hallowed by your beauty! Shall that form be clasped in the arms of a base-born peasant? Beloved, beautiful Pauline! fly with me — my carriage waits without — I will bear you to a home more meet for your reception. Wealth, luxury, station — all shall yet be yours. I forget your past disdain — I remember only your beauty, and my unconquerable love!

PAULINE.

Sir! leave this house — it is humble: hut a husband's roof, however lowly, is, in the eyes of God and Man, the temple of a wife's honour! Know that I would rather starve — yes! — with him who has betrayed me, than accept your lawful hand, even were you the Prince whose name he bore! — Go!

BEAUSEANT.

What! is not your pride humbled yet?

PAULINE.

Sir, what was pride in prosperity, in affliction becomes virtue.

BEAUSEANT.

Look round: these rugged floors — these homely walls — this wretched struggle of poverty for comfort — think of this! and contrast with such a picture the refinement, the luxury, the pomp that the wealthiest gentleman of Lyons offers to the loveliest lady. Ah, hear me!

PAULINE.

Oh! my father! — why did I leave you? — why am I thus friendless? Sir, you see before you a betrayed, injured, miserable woman! — respect her anguish!

(Melnotte opens the door silently, and pauses at the threshold.)

BEAUSEANT.

No! let me rather thus console it; — let me snatch from those lips one breath of that fragrance which never should be wasted on the low churl thy husband.

PAULINE.

Help! Claude! — Claude! Have I no protector?

BEAUSEANT.

Be silent! *(showing a pistol)* See, I do not come unprepared even for violence. I will brave all things — thy husband and all his race — for thy sake. Thus, then, I clasp thee!

MELNOTTE *(dashing him to the other end of the stage.)*

Pauline — look up, Pauline! thou art safe.

— BEAUSEANT *(levelling his pistol).*

Dare you thus insult a man of my birth, ruffian?

PAULINE.

Oh, spare him — spare my husband! — Beauseant — Claude — no — no — *(faints.)*

MELNOTTE.

Miserable trickster! shame upon you! brave devices to terrify a woman! coward — you tremble — you have outraged the laws — you know that your weapon is harmless — you have the courage of the mountebank, not the bravo! — Pauline, there is no danger.

BEAUSEANT.

I wish thou wert a gentleman — as it is thou art beneath me. — Good day, and a happy honeymoon. (*aside*) I will not die till I am avenged. [*Exit Beauseant.*]

MELNOTTE.

I hold her in these arms—the last embrace!
Never, ah never more, shall this dear head
Be pillow'd on the heart that should have shelter'd
And has betray'd! Soft—soft! one kiss — poor wretch!
No scorn on that pale lip forbids me now!
One kiss—so ends all record of my crime!
It is the seal upon the tomb of Hope,
By which, like some lost, sorrowing angel, sits
Sad Memory evermore; — she breathes—she moves—
She wakes to scorn, to hate, but not to shudder
Beneath the touch of my abhorred love.

(*Places her on a seat.*)

There—we are strangers now!

PAULINE.

All gone—all calm —
Is *every* thing a dream? thou art safe, unhurt—
I do not love thee; but—but I am woman,
Aod—and—no blood is spilt?

MELNOTTE.

No, lady, no;

My guilt hath not deserved so rich a blessing
As even danger in thy cause.

(*Enter Widow.*)

WIDOW.

My son, I have been everywhere in search of you;
why did you send for me?

MELNOTTE.

I did not send for you.

WIDOW.

No! but I must tell you your express has returned.

MELNOTTE.

So soon! impossible!

WIDOW.

Yes, he met the lady's father and mother on the road; they were going into the country on a visit. Your messenger says that Monsieur Deschappelles turned almost white with anger, when he read your letter. They will be here almost immediately. Oh, Claude, Claude! what will they do to you? How I tremble!— Ah, Madam! do not let them injure him — if you knew how he doted on you!

PAULINE.

Injure him! no, Ma'am, be not afraid; — my father! how shall I meet him? how go back to Lyons? the scoff of the whole city! — cruel, cruel Claude — (*in great agitation*) — Sir, you have acted most treacherously.

MELNOTTE.

I know it, Madam.

PAULINE.

(*Aside*) If he would but ask me to forgive him! —
I never can forgive you, Sir!

MELNOTTE.

I never dared to hope it.

PAULINE.

But you are my husband now, and I have sworn to—to love you, Sir.

MELNOTTE.

That was under a false belief, Madam; Heaven and the laws will release you from your vow.

PAULINE.

He will drive me mad! if he were but less proud—if he would but ask me to remain—hark, hark—I hear the wheels of the carriage—Sir—Claude, they are coming; have you no word to say ere it is too late? quick—speak!

MELNOTTE.

I can only congratulate you on your release. Behold your parents!

(Enter Monsieur and Madame Deschappelles and Colonel Damas.)

MONS. DESCHAPP.

My child! — my child!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Oh, my poor Pauline! — what a villanous hovel this is! Old woman, get me a chair — I shall faint — I certainly shall. What will the world say? — Child, you have been a fool. A mother's heart is easily broken.

DAMAS.

Ha, ha! — most noble Prince — I am sorry to see a man of your quality in such a condition; I am afraid your Highness will go to the House of Correction.

MELNOTTE.

Taunt on, Sir — I spared *you* when you were unarmed — I am unarmed now. A man who has no excuse for crime is indeed defenceless!

DAMAS.

There's something fine in the rascal, after all!

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Where is the impostor? — Are you thus shameless, traitor? Can you brave the presence of that girl's father?

MELNOTTE.

Strike me, if it please you—you *are* her father!

PAULINE.

Sir—sir, for my sake; — whatever his guilt, he has acted nobly in atonement.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Nobly! Are you mad, girl? I have no patience with you — to disgrace all your family thus! Nobly! Oh, you abominable, hardened, pitiful, mean, ugly villain!

DAMAS.

Ugly! Why he was beautiful yesterday!

PAULINE.

Madam, this is his roof, and he is my husband. Respect your daughter, and let blame fall alone on her.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

You—you—Oh, I'm choking.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Sir, it were idle to waste reproach upon a conscience like yours — you renounce all pretensions to the person of this lady?

MELNOTTE.

I do. — (*Gives a paper.*) Here is my consent to a divorce — my full confession of the fraud, which annuls the marriage. Your daughter has been foully wronged—I grant it, Sir; but her own lips will tell you, that from the hour in which she crossed this threshold, I returned to my own station, and respected hers. Pure and inviolate, as when yesternorn you laid your hand upon her head and blessed her, I yield her back to you. For myself—I deliver you for ever from my presence. An outcast and a criminal, I seek some distant land, where I may mourn my sin and pray for your daughter's peace. Farewell—farewell to you all, for ever!

WIDOW.

Claude, Claude, you will not leave your poor old mother? *She* does not disown you in your sorrow — no, not even in your guilt. No divorce can separate a mother from her son.

PAULINE.

This poor widow teaches me my duty. No, mother — no, for you are now *my* mother also! — nor should any law, human or divine, separate the wife from her husband's sorrows. Claude — Claude — all is forgotten — forgiven — I am thine for ever!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

What do I hear? — Come away, or never see my face again.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Pauline, *we* never betrayed you! — do you forsake us for him?

PAULINE (*going back to her father.*)

Oh, no—but you will forgive him too; we will live together—he shall be your son.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Never! Cling to him and forsake your parents! His home shall be yours—his fortune yours—his fate yours: the wealth I have acquired by honest industry shall never enrich the dishonest man.

PAULINE.

And you would have a wife enjoy luxury while a husband toils! Claude, take me; thou canst not give me wealth, titles, station—but thou canst give me a true heart. I will work for thee, tend thee, bear with thee, and never, never shall these lips reproach thee for the past.

DAMAS.

I'll be hanged if I am not going to blubber!

MELNOTTE.

This is the heaviest blow of all!—What a heart I have wronged!—Do not fear me, Sir; I am not all hardened—I will not rob her of a holier love than mine. Pauline—angel of love and mercy!—your memory shall lead me back to virtue!—The husband of a being so beautiful in her noble and sublime tenderness may be poor—may be low-born;—(there is no guilt in the decrees of Providence!)—but he should be one who can look thee in the face without a blush,—to whom thy love does not bring remorse,—who can fold thee to his heart, and say,—“*Here there is no deceit!*”—I am not that man!

DAMAS (*aside to Melnotte.*)

Thou art a noble fellow, notwithstanding; and would'st make an excellent soldier. Serve in my regiment. I have had a letter from the Directory — our young General takes the command of the army in Italy, — I am to join him at Marseilles, — I will depart this day, if thou wilt go with me.

MELNOTTE.

It is the favour I would have asked thee, if I dared. Place me wherever a foe is most dreaded, — wherever France most needs a life!

DAMAS.

There shall not be a forlorn hope without thee!

MELNOTTE.

There is my hand! — Mother! your blessing. I shall see you again, — a better man than a prince, — a man who has bought the right to high thoughts by brave deeds. And thou! — thou! so wildly worshipped, so guiltily betrayed, — all is not yet lost! — for thy memory, at least, must be mine till death! If I live, the name of him thou hast once loved shall not rest dishonoured; — if I fall, amidst the carnage and roar of battle, my soul will fly back to thee, and Love shall share with Death my last sigh! — More — more would I speak to thee! — to pray! — to bless! But, no! — when I am less unworthy I will utter it to Heaven! — I cannot trust myself to — — (*turning to Deschappelles.*) Your pardon, Sir; — they are my last words — Farewell! [Exit.]

DAMAS.

I will go after him. — France will thank me for this. [Exit.]

PAULINE (*starting from her father's arms.*)
Claude! — Claude! my husband!

MONS. DESCHAPP.

You have a father still!

ACT V.

SCENE I.

Two years and a half from the date of Act IV.

The Streets of Lyons.

(*Enter First, Second, and Third Officers.*)

FIRST OFFICER.

Well, here we are at Lyons, with gallant old Damas: it is his native place.

SECOND OFFICER.

Yes; he has gained a step in the army since he was here last. The Lyonnese ought to be very proud of stout General Damas.

THIRD OFFICER.

Promotion is quick in the French army. This mysterious Morier,—the hero of Lodi, and the favourite of the Commander-in-Chief,—has risen to a colonel's rank in two years and a half.

(*Enter Damas, as a General.*)

DAMAS.

Good morrow, gentlemen; I hope you will amuse yourselves during our short stay at Lyons. It is a fine city; improved since I left it. Ah! it is a pleasure

to grow old, — when the years that bring decay to ourselves do but ripen the prosperity of our country. You have not met with Morier?

FIRST OFFICER.

No: we were just speaking of him.

SECOND OFFICER.

Pray, General, can you tell us who this Morier really is?

DAMAS.

Is! — why a Colonel in the French army.

THIRD OFFICER.

True. But what was he at first?

DAMAS.

At first? — Why, a baby in long clothes, I suppose.

FIRST OFFICER.

Ha! — ha! — Ever facetious, General.

SECOND OFFICER (*to Third.*)

The General is sore upon this point; you will only chafe him. — Any commands, General?

DAMAS.

None. — Good day to you!

[*Exeunt Second and Third Officers.*]

DAMAS.

Our comrades are very inquisitive. Poor Morier is the subject of a vast deal of curiosity.

FIRST OFFICER.

Say interest, rather, General. His constant melancholy, the loneliness of his habits, — his daring valour, — his brilliant rise in the profession, — your friendship, and the favours of the Commander-in-Chief, — all tend to make him as much the matter of

gossip as of admiration. But where is he, General? I have missed him all the morning.

DAMAS.

Why, Captain, I'll let you into a secret. My young friend has come with me to Lyons in hopes of finding a miracle.

FIRST OFFICER.

A miracle! —

DAMAS.

Yes, a miracle! In other words,—a constant woman.

FIRST OFFICER.

Oh! — an affair of love!

DAMAS.

Exactly so. No sooner did he enter Lyons than he waved his hand to me, threw himself from his horse, and is now, I warrant, asking every one, who can know anything about the matter, whether a certain lady is still true to a certain gentleman!

FIRST OFFICER.

Success to him!—and of that success there can be no doubt. The gallant Colonel Morier, the hero of Lodi, might make his choice out of the proudest families in France.

DAMAS.

Oh, if pride be a recommendation, the lady and her mother are most handsomely endowed. By the way, Captain, if you should chance to meet with Morier, tell him he will find me at the hotel.

FIRST OFFICER.

I will, General.

[*Exit.*]

DAMAS.

Now will I go to the Deschappelles, and make a report to my young Colonel. Ha! by Mars, Bacchus, Apollo, Virorum, — here comes Monsieur Beauseant!

(*Enter Beauseant.*)

Good morrow, Monsieur Beauseant! How fares it with you?

BEAUSEANT (*aside.*)

Damas! that is unfortunate; — if the Italian campaign should have filled his pockets, he may seek to baffle me in the moment of my victory. (*Aloud*) Your servant, General, — for such, I think, is your new distinction! Just arrived in Lyous?

DAMAS.

Not an hour ago. Well, how go on the Deschappelles? Have they forgiven you in that affair of young Melnotte? You had some hand in that notable device, — eh?

BEAUSEANT.

Why, less than you think for! The fellow imposed upon me. I have set it all right now. What has become of him? He could not have joined the army, after all. There is no such name in the books.

DAMAS.

I know nothing about Melnotte. As you say, I never heard the name in the Grand Army.

BEAUSEANT.

Hem! — You are not married, General?

DAMAS.

Do I look like a married man, Sir? — No, thank Heaven! My profession is to make widows, not wives.

BEAUSEANT.

You must have gained much booty in Italy! Pauline will be your heiress—eh?

DAMAS.

Booty! Not I! Heiress to what? Two trunks and a portmanteau, — four horses, — three swords, — two suits of regimentals, and six pair of white leather inexpressibles! A pretty fortune for a young lady!

BEAUSEANT.

(*Aside*) Then all is safe! (*Aloud*) Ha! ha! Is that really all your capital, General Damas? Why, I thought Italy had been a second Mexico to you soldiers.

DAMAS.

All a toss up, Sir. I was not one of the lucky ones! My friend Morier, indeed, saved something handsome. But our Commander-in-Chief took care of him, and Morier is a thrifty, economical dog, — not like the rest of us soldiers, who spend our money as carelessly as if it were our blood.

BEAUSEANT.

Well, it is no matter! I do not want fortune with Pauline. And you must know, General Damas, that your fair cousin has at length consented to reward my long and ardent attachment.

DAMAS.

You! — the devil! Why, she is already married! There is no divorce!

BEAUSEANT.

True; but this very day she is formally to authorise the necessary proceedings, — this very day she is to sign the contract that is to make her mine within one week

from the day on which her present illegal marriage is annulled.

DAMAS.

You tell me wonders! — Wonders! No; I believe anything of women!

BEAUSEANT.

I must wish you good morning.

[*As he is going, enter Deschappelles.*]

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Oh, Beauseant! well met. Let us come to the notary at once.

DAMAS (*to Deschappelles.*)

Why, cousin?

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Damas, welcome to Lyons. Pray call on us; my wife will be delighted to see you.

DAMAS.

Your wife be——blessed for her condescension! But (*taking him aside*), what do I hear? Is it possible that your daughter has consented to a divorce? — that she will marry Monsieur Beauseant?

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Certainly! What have you to say against it? A gentleman of birth, fortune, character. We are not so proud as we were; even my wife has had enough of nobility and princes!

DAMAS.

But Pauline loved that young man so tenderly!

· MONS. DESCHAPP. (*taking snuff.*)

That was two years and a half ago!

DAMAS.

Very true. Poor Melnotte!

MONS. DESCHAPP.

But do not talk of that impostor; I hope he is dead or has left the country. Nay, even were he in Lyons at this moment, he ought to rejoice that, in an honourable and suitable alliance, my daughter may forget her sufferings and his crime.

DAMAS.

Nay, if it be all settled, I have no more to say. Monsieur Beauseant informs me that the contract is to be signed this very day.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

It is; at one o'clock precisely. Will you be one of the witnesses?

DAMAS.

I? — No; that is to say — yes, certainly! — at one o'clock I will wait on you.

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Till then, adieu—come, Beauseant.

[Exeunt Beauseant and Deschappelles.]

DAMAS.

The man who sets his heart upon a woman
Is a chameleon, and doth feed on air;
From air he takes his colours,—holds his life,—
Changes with every wind,—grows lean or fat;
Rosy with hope, or green with jealousy,
Or pallid with despair — just as the gale
Varies from north to south — from heat to cold!
Oh, woman! woman! thou should'st have few sins
Of thine own to answer for! Thou art the author
Of such a book of follies in a man,
That it would need the tears of all the angels
To blot the record out!

(Enter Melnotte, pale and agitated.)

I need not tell thee! Thou hast heard —

MELNOTTE.

The worst!

I have!

DAMAS.

Be cheer'd; others are as fair as she is!

MELNOTTE.

Others! — The world is crumbled at my feet!
 She *was* my world; fill'd up the whole of being —
 Smiled in the sunshine — walk'd the glorious earth —
 Sate in my heart — was the sweet life of life.
 The Past was hers: I dreamt not of a Future
 That did not wear her shape! Mem'ry and Hope
 Alike are gone. Pauline is faithless! Henceforth
 The universal space is desolate!

DAMAS.

Hope yet.

MELNOTTE.

Hope, yes! — one hope is left me still —
 A soldier's grave! Glory has died with Love;
 I look into my heart, and, where I saw
 Pauline, see Death!

(After a pause.) — But am I not deceived?
 I went but by the rumour of the town;
 Rumour is false, — I was too hasty! Damas,
 Whom hast thou seen?

DAMAS.

Thy rival and her father.
 Arm thyself for the truth! He heeds not —

MELNOTTE.

She

Will never know how deeply she was loved!
 The charitable night, that wont to bring
 Comfort to day, in bright and eloquent dreams,
 Is henceforth leagued with misery! Sleep, farewell,
 Or else become eternal! Oh, the waking
 From false oblivion, and to see the sun,
 And know she is another's! — —

DAMAS.

Be a man.

MELNOTTE.

I am a man! — it is the sting of woe,
 Like mine, that tells us we are men!

DAMAS.

The false one

Did not deserve thee.

MELNOTTE.

Hush! — No word against her!

Why should she keep, thro' years and silent absence,
 The holy tablets of her virgin faith
 True to a traitor's name? Oh, blame her not,
 It were a sharper grief to think her worthless
 Than to be what I am! To-day, — to-day!
 They said 'to-day!' This day, so wildly welcomed —
 This day, my soul had singled out of time
 And mark'd for bliss! This day! oh, could I see her,
 See her once more, unknown; but hear her voice,
 So that one echo of its music might
 Make ruin less appalling in its silence!

DAMAS.

Easily done! Come with me to her house;
 Your dress — your cloak — moustache — the bronzed hues
 Of time and toil — the name you bear — belief

In your absence, all will ward away suspicion.
 Keep in the shade. Ay, I would have you come.
 There may be hope! Pauline is yet so young,
 They may have forced her to these second bridals
 Out of mistaken love.

MELNOTTE.

No, bid me hope not!
 Bid me not hope! I could not bear again
 To fall from such a heaven! One gleam of sunshine,
 And the ice breaks and I am lost! Oh, Damas,
 There's no such thing as courage in a man;
 The veriest slave that ever crawl'd from danger
 Might spurn me now. When first I lost her, Damas,
 I bore it, did I not? I still had hope,
 And now I — I —

(bursts into an agony of grief.)

DAMAS.

What, comrade! all the women
 That ever smiled destruction on brave hearts
 Were not worth tears like these!

MELNOTTE.

'Tis past — forget it.
 I am prepared; life has no farther ills!
 The cloud has broken in that stormy rain,
 And on the waste I stand, alone with Heaven!

DAMAS.

His very face is changed; a breaking heart
 Does its work soon! — Come, Melnotte, rouse thyself:
 One effort more. Again thou'lt see her.

MELNOTTE.

See her!

There is a passion in that simple sentence.

That shivers all the pride and power of reason
Into a chaos!

DAMAS.

Time wanes ; come , ere yet
It be too late.

MELNOTTE.

Terrible words — “ *Too late !*”
Lead on. One last look more, and then —

DAMAS.

Forget her!

MELNOTTE.

Forget her! — Yes — for death remembers not.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A room in the house of Monsieur Deschappelles; Pauline seated in great dejection.

PAULINE.

It is so then. I must be false to Love,
Or sacrifice a father! Oh, my Claude,
My lover, and my husband! have I lived
To pray that thou may'st find some fairer boon
Than the deep faith of this devoted heart, —
Nourish'd till now — now broken?

(*Enter Monsieur Deschappelles.*)

MONS. DESCHAPP.

My dear child,
How shall I thank — how bless thee? Thou hast saved —
I will not say my fortune — I could bear
Reverse, and shrink not — but that prouder wealth
Which merchants value most — my name, my credit —
The hard-won honours of a toilsome life —
These thou hast saved, my child!

PAULINE.

Is there no hope ?

No hope but this ?

MONS. DESCHAPP.

None. If, without the sum
Which Beuseant offers for thy hand, this day
Sinks to the west — to-morrow brings our ruin!
And hundreds, mingled in that ruin, curse
The bankrupt merchant! and the insolent herd
We feasted and made merry cry in scorn,
“How pride has fallen! — Lo, the bankrupt merchant!” —
My daughter, thou hast saved us!

PAULINE.

And am lost!

MONS. DESCHAPP.

Come, let me hope that Beuseant's love —

PAULINE.

His love!

Talk not of love — Love has no thought of self!
Love buys not with the ruthless usurer's gold
The loathsome prostitution of a hand
Without a heart! Love sacrifices all things
To bless the thing it loves! *He* knows not love.
Father, his love is hate — his hope revenge!
My tears, my anguish, my remorse for falsehood —
These are the joys he wrings from our despair!

MONS. DESCHAPP.

If thou deem'st thus, reject him! Shame and ruin
Were better than thy misery; — think no more on't.
My sand is well-nigh run — what boots it when
The glass is broken? We'll annul the contract.
And if to-morrow in the prisoner's cell
These aged limbs are laid, why still, my child,

I'll think thou art spared; and wait the Liberal Hour
That lays the beggar by the side of kings!

PAULINE.

No — no — forgive me! You, my honour'd father, —
You, who so loved, so cherish'd me, whose lips
Never knew one harsh word! I'm not ungrateful,
I am but human! — hush! *Now*, call the bridegroom —
You see I am prepared — no tears — all calm;
But, father, *talk no more of love!*

MONS. DESCHAPP.

My child,

'Tis but one struggle; he is young, rich, noble;
Thy state will rank first 'mid the dames of Lyons;
And when this heart can shelter thee no more,
Thy youth will not be guardianless.

PAULINE.

I have set

My foot upon the ploughshare — I will pass
The fiery ordeal. (*Aside*) Merciful Heaven, support me!
And on the absent wanderer shed the light
Of happier stars — lost evermore to me!
(*Enter Madame Deschappelles, Beauseant, Glavis and
Notary.*)

MADAME DESCHAPP.

Why, Pauline, you are quite in *deshabille* — you
ought to be more alive to the importance of this joyful
occasion. We had once looked higher, it is true; but
you see, after all, Monsieur Beauseant's father *was* a
Marquis, and that's a great comfort! Pedigree and
jointure! — you have them both in Monsieur Beauseant.
A young lady decorously brought up should only have
two considerations in her choice of a husband: — first,

is his birth honourable; — secondly, will his death be advantageous? All other trifling details should be left to parental anxiety!

BEAUSEANT (*approaching, and waving aside Madame*).

Ah, Pauline! let me hope that you are reconciled to an event which confers such rapture upon me.

PAULINE.

I am reconciled to my doom.

BEAUSEANT.

Doom is a harsh word, sweet lady.

PAULINE (*aside*).

This man must have some mercy — his heart cannot be marble. (*Aloud*) Oh, Sir, be just — be generous! — Seize a noble triumph — a great revenge! — Save the father, and spare the child!

BEAUSEANT (*aside*).

Joy — joy alike to my hatred and my passion! The haughty Pauline is at last my suppliant. (*Aloud*) You ask from me what I have not the sublime virtue to grant — a virtue reserved only for the gardener's son! I cannot forego my hopes in the moment of their fulfilment! — I adhere to the contract — your father's ruin, or your hand!

PAULINE.

Then all is over. Sir, I have decided.

(*The Clock strikes One.*)

(*Enter Damas and Melnotte.*)

DAMAS.

Your servant, cousin Deschappelles — Let me introduce Colonel Morier.

MADAME DESCHAPP. (*curtsying very low*).

What, the celebrated hero? This is indeed an honour!

(*Melnotte bows and remains in the back-ground.*)

DAMAS (*to Pauline*).

My little cousin, I congratulate you! What, no smile — no blush? You are going to be divorced from poor Melnotte, and marry this rich gentleman. You ought to be excessively happy!

PAULINE.

Happy!

DAMAS.

Why, how pale you are, child! — Poor Pauline! Hist — confide in me! Do they force you to this?

PAULINE.

No!

DAMAS.

You act with your own free consent?

PAULINE.

My own consent — yes.

DAMAS.

Then you are the most — I will not say what you are.

PAULINE.

You think ill of me — be it so — yet if you knew all ———

DAMAS.

There is some mystery — speak out, Pauline.

PAULINE (*suddenly*).

Oh! perhaps you can save me! you are our relation — our friend. My father is on the verge of bankruptcy — this day he requires a large sum to meet demands that cannot be denied; that sum Beauseant will advance — this hand the condition of the barter. Save me if you have the means — save me! You will be repaid above!

DAMAS (*aside*).

I recant — Women are not so bad, after all! — (*aloud*)
Humph, child! I cannot help you — I am too poor!

PAULINE.

The last plank to which I clung is shivered!

DAMAS.

Hold — you see my friend Morier: Melnotte is his most intimate friend — fought in the same fields — slept in the same tent. Have you any message to send to Melnotte? — any word to soften this blow?

PAULINE.

He knows Melnotte — he will see him — he will bear to him my last farewell — (*approaches Melnotte*) — He has a stern air — he turns away from me — he despises me! Sir, one word, I beseech you.

MELNOTTE.

Her voice again! How the old time comes o'er me!

DAMAS (*to Madame*).

Don't interrupt them. He is going to tell her what a rascal young Melnotte is; he knows him well, I promise you.

MADAME DESCHAPP.

So considerate in you, cousin Damas!

(*Damas approaches Deschappelles; converses apart with him in dumb show — Deschappelles shows him a paper, which he inspects, and takes.*)

PAULINE.

Thrice have I sought to speak; my courage fails me. Sir, is it true that you have known — nay, are The friend of — Melnotte?

MELNOTTE.

Lady, yes! — Myself
And Misery know the man!

PAULINE.

And you will see him.
 And you will bear to him — ay — word for word,
 All that this heart, which breaks in parting from him,
 Would send, ere still for ever.

MELNOTTE.

He hath told me
 You have the right to choose from out the world
 A worthier bridegroom; — he foregoes all claim
 Even to murmur at his doom. Speak on!

PAULINE.

Tell him, for years I never nursed a thought
 That was not his; — that on his wandering way,
 Daily and nightly, poured a mourner's prayers.
 Tell him ev'n now that I would rather share
 His lowliest lot, — walk by his side, an outcast; —
 Work for him, beg with him, — live upon the light
 Of one kind smile from him, than wear the crown
 The Bourbon lost!

MELNOTTE (*aside.*)

Am I already mad?

And does Delirium utter such sweet words
 Into a Dreamer's ear? (*Aloud.*) You love him thus,
 And yet desert him?

PAULINE.

Say, that, if his eye
 Could read this heart, — its struggles, its temptations —
 His love itself would pardon that desertion!
 Look on that poor old man — he is my father;
 He stands upon the verge of an abyss; —
 He calls his child to save him! Shall I shrink
 From him who gave me birth? — withhold my hand,

And see a parent perish? Tell him this,
And say — that we shall meet again in Heaven!

MELNOTTE (*aside*).

The night is past — joy cometh with the morrow.
(*Aloud.*) Laey — I — I — what is this riddle? — what
The nature of this sacrifice?

PAULINE (*pointing to Damas*).

Go, ask him!

BEAUSEANT (*from the table*).

The papers are prepared — we only need
Your hand and seal.

MELNOTTE.

Stay, lady — one word more.
Were but your duty with your faith united,
Would you still share the low-born peasant's lot?

PAULINE.

Would I? Ah, better death with him I love
Than all the pomp — which is but as the flowers
That crown the victim! — (*turning away*) I am ready.
(*Melnotte rushes to Damas.*)

DAMAS.

There —

This is the schedule — this the total.

BEAUSEANT (*to Deschappelles, showing notes*).

These

Are yours the instant she has signed; you are
Still the great House of Lyons!

(*The Notary is about to hand the Contract to Pauline,
when Melnotte seizes and tears it.*)

BEAUSEANT.

Are you mad?

MONS. DESCHAPP.

How, Sir! What means this insult?

MELNOTTE.

Peace, old man!

I have a prior claim. Before the face
Of man and Heaven I urge it! I outbid
Yon sordid huckster for your priceless jewel.

(Giving a pocket-book.)

There is the sum twice told! Blush not to take it.
There's not a coin that is not bought and hallow'd
In the cause of nations with a soldier's blood!

BEAUSEANT.

Torments and death!

PAULINE.

That voice! Thou art —

MELNOTTE.

Thy husband!

(Pauline rushes into his arms.)

MELNOTTE.

Look up! Look up, Pauline! — for I can bear
Thine eyes! The stain is blotted from my name.
I have redeem'd mine honour, I can call
On France to sanction thy divine forgiveness!
Oh, joy! — Oh, rapture! By the midnight watchfires
Thus have I seen thee! — thus foretold this hour!
And, 'midst the roar of battle, thus have heard
The beating of thy heart against my own!

BEAUSEANT.

Fool'd, duped, and triumph'd over in the hour;
Of mine own victory! Curses on ye both!
May thorns be planted in the marriage bed!
And love grow sour'd and blacken'd into hate,
Such as the hate that gnaws me!

DAMAS.

Curse away!

And let me tell thee, Beauseant, a wise proverb
The Arabs have, — "Curses are like young chickens,
(*Solemnly.*)

And still come home to roost!"

BEAUSEANT.

Their happiness
Maddens my soul! I am powerless and revengeless!
(*To Madame.*)

I wish you joy! Ha, ha! The gardener's son! [*Exit.*]

DAMAS (*to Glavis.*)

Your friend intends to hang himself! Methinks
You ought to be his travelling companion!

GLAVIS.

Sir, you are exceedingly obliging! [*Exit.*]

PAULINE.

Oh!

My father, you are saved, — and by my husband!
Ah! blessed hour!

MELNOTTE.

Yet you weep still, Pauline!

PAULINE.

But on thy breast! — *these* tears are sweet and holy!

MONS. DESCHAPP.

You have won love and honour nobly, Sir!
Take her; — be happy both!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

I'm all astonish'd!

Who, then, is Colonel Morier?

DAMAS.

You behold him!

MELNOTTE.

Morier no more after this happy day!
I would not bear again my father's name
Till I could deem it spotless! The hour's come!
Heaven smiled on Conscience! As the soldier rose
From rank to rank, how sacred was the fame
That cancell'd crime, and raised him nearer thee!

MADAME DESCHAPP.

A colonel and a hero! Well, that's something!
He's wondrously improved! I wish you joy, Sir!

MELNOTTE.

Ah! the same love that tempts us into sin,
If it be true love, works out its redemption;
And he who seeks repentance for the Past
Should woo the Angel Virtue in the Future!



THE

Most no more after this happy day!

I would not bear again my father's name

Till I could bear it again! The hour's come

When I shall smile on Conscience! A the soldier's

Now I am to walk, how sacred was the time

That cannot be crime, and raised him near thee!

THE

And a field! With that something!

It's wonderfully improved! I wish you joy, Sir!

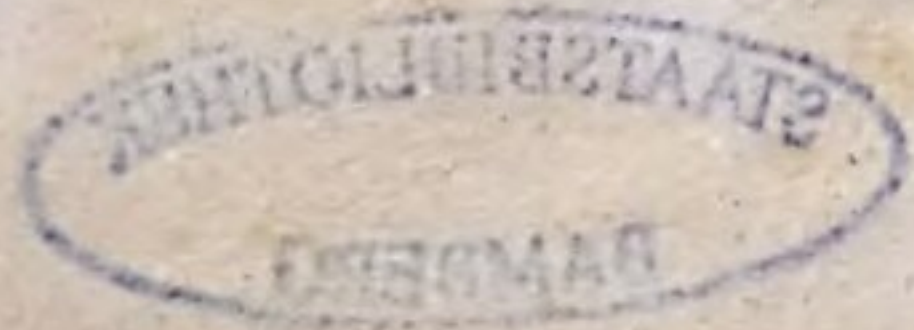
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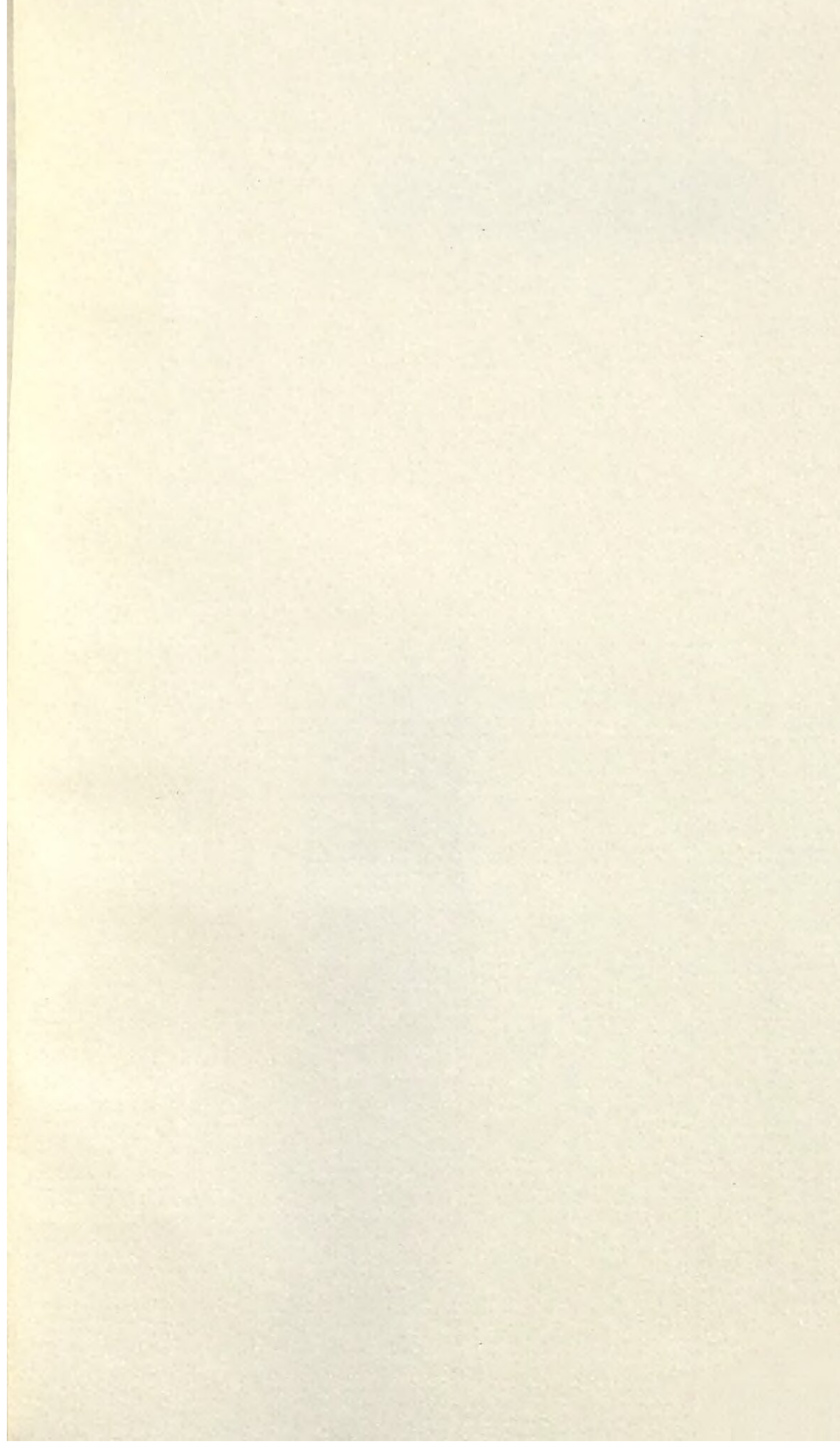
LEIPZIG, PRINTED BY B. G. TEUBNER.

It is the truest, most out of the question

And he who seeks redemption for the past

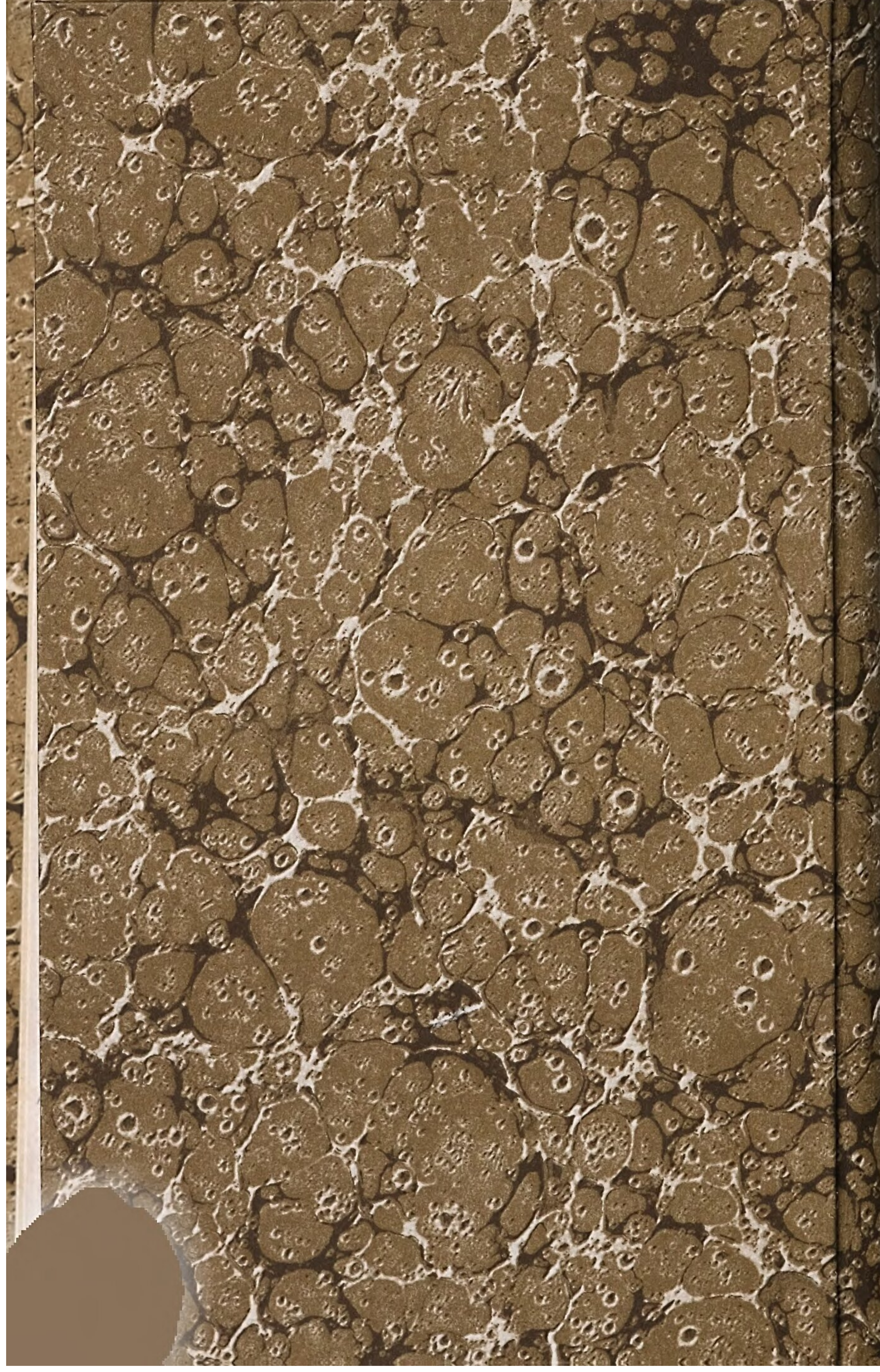
Should see the Angel Victor in the future!





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